



"... he was not only deeply learned but was a rare example of one so totally intent on the goal that he was willing to renounce everything in order to realize it in this life itself."

- Bhikkhu Bodhi

TO THE END OF BODY & MIND

THE STORY OF NYĀṆADĪPA BHANTE'S LIFE AND
HIS TEACHINGS AT BHADDEKA VIHARI ARANYA

COMPILED BY BHANTE JOE ATULO

To the End of Body and Mind

The Story of Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's Life and His
Teachings at Bhaddeka Vihari Aranya

Compiled by Bhante Joe Atulo

Copyright Information

“The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts”

– The Buddha

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Acknowledgments

This book is the result of the combined efforts of many people:

First, and foremost, it is the result of *Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's* generosity. He shared his knowledge of the Dhamma at Bhaddeka Vihari for roughly six months. He also told many stories about his life. This was a great gift. For me, it was one of the great Dhamma opportunities of my life.

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Several years ago, I met *Nyāṇasumana Bhante* in Thailand. We stayed together for a short time at Wat Pah Nanachat. At the time, I mentioned to him that I would like to come to Sri Lanka. Also, I mentioned that I hoped to meet Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. He said that he was Bhante's upathak (attendant) and he would arrange for me to come. Roughly six years later, he helped in almost every way to facilitate my stay in Sri Lanka. Thanks to his help, I had the chance to come to Sri Lanka and meet Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. His generosity is extremely great. We had only stayed together for a short time, roughly six years before.

Nyāṇasumana Bhante also provided the cover photo and most of the photos in Appendix II. Many, if not most, of the photos of Nyāṇadīpa Bhante in circulation today were taken by him.

Ajahn Hiriko helped to provide many details of Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's life. Ajahn is writing a biography about Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's life, entitled 'The Island Within'. It promises to be a thorough and well-researched read. Interested readers can learn more about Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's life and teachings by referring to the forthcoming book. It is planned to be published by Path Press publications. Kindly see www.pathpresspublications.com for more details.

Jinasiri Bhikkhu, and a sāmaṇera who wishes to remain anonymous, helped attend to Nyāṇadīpa Bhante during his stay. They shared stories and teachings that Bhante had given them while they assisted him. *Sujāno Bhante* also shared the teachings that he heard from Bhante. This book has been enriched by their generosity.

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Piyal Walpola tracked down many of the suttas that Bhante referred to. Thanks to his help, readers have the opportunity to refer to the source material on which Nyāṇadīpa Bhante based some of his explanations. Referring back to the suttas is almost certainly something which Nyāṇadīpa Bhante would have recommended. Both *Piyal* and *Indi Walpola* provided valuable feedback on the book's title.

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Thanks to the help of these people, and more, this book has become a possibility. Any errors that remain are my responsibility.

Bhante Joe
Bhaddeka Vihari Aranya
November 2020

Introduction

In January 2020, Nyānadīpa Bhante came to stay at Bhaddaka Vihari Aranya. He was feeling in good health and was very open to discussing the Dhamma. Resident and visiting monks were able to gain inspiration from his teachings.

Bhante left for a short time but returned about a month later. He had recently seen a specialist and returned with the unfortunate news that he had less than a year to live. He secluded himself in his kuṭi to try to finish the work remaining for him. Despite his unfortunate situation, he kindly agreed to conduct Dhamma discussions every Thursday.

Bhante generously shared his knowledge of the Dhamma with the monks and laypeople seated at his feet. For some of those who attended, it felt as if they were back in the time of the Buddha, learning the Dhamma from a great teacher in the seclusion of the forest. Even as his health declined, Bhante continued to teach. His Dhamma discussions spanned about six months in total.

Bhante tried to avoid fame; he was not open to having the discussions themselves recorded. However, he did permit me to record notes after each session. Therefore, after each Dhamma discussion, I would record audio notes of what Bhante had said. In most cases, I would record what Bhante said within the same day -- usually within four or five hours. This was to capture as much of Bhante's teaching as I could while my memory was still fresh.

This book is a result of these notes. However, it is a shortcoming of the book that I was not able to capture direct quotes. Therefore, Nyānadīpa Bhante's quotes in this book are paraphrased.

Nyānadīpa Bhante also spoke at length about his life. Therefore, this book also includes a biography.

Bhante was both an expert in Pāli and the suttas and a meditation practitioner. His teachings focus on the Buddha's teaching in the canon. His explanations are also enriched by his personal experience.

Bhante's explanations include many technical Pāli terms. This may be somewhat daunting for readers new to Buddhist terminology. A glossary is included at the back of the book to aid understanding.

It is hoped that Bhante's teachings will bring benefit to the reader. It is also hoped that this book might convey some of the inspiration that one felt in the presence of one of Sri Lanka's great monks of the modern age.

Bhante Joe

Bhaddeka Vihari Aranya

November, 2020

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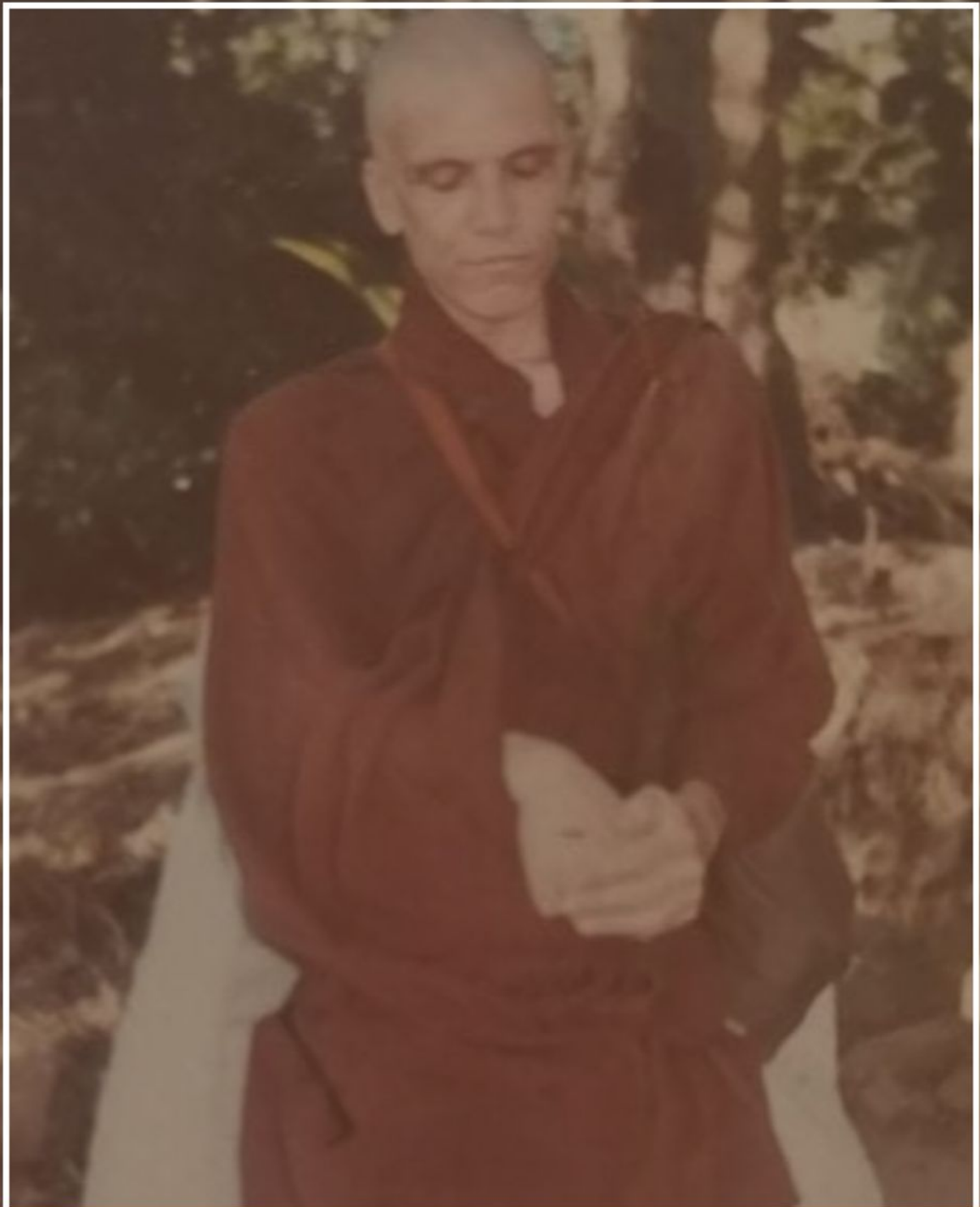
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Early Life



Early Life

The External Search

The Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot sighted his target. In the ocean ahead was a liner flying the Nazi flag. It was 1945, and the war was drawing to a close. The allies had re-taken control of much of Europe. Nazi leaders were fleeing to other countries in hopes of evading capture. Since the liner displayed a Nazi flag, it was assumed that it carried fleeing Nazi leaders. The ship was bombed, likely killing most of the passengers on board. It was May 3rd, 1945 — five days before the allies formally accepted Germany's unconditional surrender of its army, ending World War II in Europe.

Among the passengers killed was Eugene Jeune. He left behind his wife, Renée, and two young sons: Bernard and Denys. Denys, who would later ordain as Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, had been born about seven months earlier, on November 12th, 1944.

Tragically, the RAF was mistaken. The ship was actually carrying Nazi prisoners of war. Eugene had been a member of the French resistance. He had been captured and taken to a concentration camp. Later, he was put on the ship and was unfortunately present when it was bombed.

Eugene had known that he might die in the course of the war. While in the concentration camp, he met a fellow Danish freedom fighter named Gregers Jensen. The two friends made a pact: if Eugene didn't make it, Gregers would care for his two young sons.

With the defeat of the Nazis, people began to pick up the pieces of their lives. Thankfully, Gregers had survived the ordeal of the concentration camp. Remembering the pact he made, he sought out Eugene's family. He sent a letter to his widow, Renée, and invited her to Denmark. Gregers and Renée eventually married. Gregers took care of Eugene's family, thus fulfilling his promise to his old wartime friend.

In Denmark, Denys received a classical education, studying Greek and Latin. In his adolescence, he became interested in philosophy. This interest eventually led him to encounter Buddhism.

Denmark had been among the pioneers in the translation of Theravada Buddhist texts. In 1855, Viggo Fausball translated the Dhammapada into Latin. This Latin translation of the Dhammapada later came to serve as a basis for the translation of the Dhammapada into English. Despite this, Denys was initially attracted to Mahāyāna Buddhism. In particular, he was

inspired by Lama Govinda's 'The Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism', which was first published when he was a teenager.

As the years went by, Denys decided that he wanted to become an academic. Perhaps inspired by his interest in Mahāyāna, he decided to major in Tibetan and Chinese. However, his studies didn't last long. When he was 19, the urge to travel drove him out of Denmark and onto three trips across Europe and Asia. He travelled the trans-Siberian railway, went from Turkey to Japan, and found his way to Cambodia, where Lama Govinda was teaching. When he was 22, his travels took him to a Sri Aurobindo ashram in Pondicherry, India. It was here that he realized that he wanted to study Buddhism. Finally, when he was 24, he arrived in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, he visited Polgasduwa, known in English as the Island Hermitage. The Island Hermitage was founded in 1911, by Ven. Nyāṇatiloka, who was originally from Germany. It was the first Theravadin monastery in the modern world established by Westerners, where Westerners could train to become monks.

While in Sri Lanka, Denys began to study the Buddha's teachings in the Pāli Canon. He realized that the Pāli suttas were the word of the Buddha. Therefore, he abandoned his original inclination towards Mahāyāna and became a follower of the Theravada school of Buddhism.

Denys found that the conditions at the Island Hermitage were excellent. He was particularly inspired by the presence of Ven. Nyāṇavimala. Ven. Nyāṇavimala was a senior German monk, from whom many Western monks would draw inspiration. He would later become well known for his practice of mindfulness. Inspired by the teachings and the atmosphere, Denys became an anagārika in 1968.

Originally, Denys thought he would live as an anagārika in Europe. Since his father was killed as a member of the resistance, he would be entitled to a pension from the French government. This pension would be enough to live on. He had family in both France and Denmark and could live in either country. With this thought in mind, he headed back to Europe, with a stop to go hiking in the Himalayas. Soon after he arrived in Europe, however, he realized that it would be too difficult to keep the precepts. So, he returned to Sri Lanka to ordain. He would later say that this trip was his last external search. His internal search was about to begin.

The Būndala Kuṭi

Ven. Nyāṇavimala rose from his seat and walked over to help Denys with his robe. It was 1969, and an auspicious day. On this day, Denys had exchanged his lay clothing for the robes of a Buddhist monastic. He had ordained as a sāmaṇera at the Island Hermitage. Ven. Nyāṇaloka was his preceptor. Ven. Nyāṇāloka was a Sinhalese disciple of Ven. Nyāṇatiloka.

In addition to the change in clothes, he also exchanged his name. From this time forward, he would be known as 'Nyāṇadīpa'. In Pāli, 'nyāṇa' means knowledge. 'Dīpa' can mean either 'lamp' or 'island'. Both readings could be seen as fitting. Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa had a penchant for solitary practice, like an island. He would also become known for the 'light' of his insight into the suttas.

Not long after his ordination, Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa was invited to come to the Būndala Kuṭi area by Ven. Nyāṇasumana. Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa had visited the Būndala Kuṭi in 1968 as a layman, so, he and Ven. Nyāṇasumana were already acquainted. Ven. Nyāṇasumana was an American monk and a fellow monastic from the Island Hermitage.

The Būndala Kuṭi had an interesting history. It was first inhabited by Ven. Nyāṇavīra. Ven. Nyāṇavīra was born in England on January 5th, 1920 and given the name Harold Edward Musson. As an adult, he served in the Second World War as an interrogator. Thereafter, he and his friend, Osbert Moore, decided to go to Sri Lanka to ordain as monks. In Sri Lanka, he and Osbert were ordained at the Island Hermitage under Ven. Nyāṇatiloka. Harold was given the name Nyāṇavīra, and Osbert was given the name Nyāṇamoli. Ven. Nyāṇamoli would go on to become an esteemed translator of Pāli texts.

In 1956, a few years after his ordination, Ven. Nyāṇavīra left the Island Hermitage. He spent his vassa at an ancient cave monastery in southeast Sri Lanka, near the village of Hambantota. After vassa, Ven. Nyāṇavīra left the cave monastery. He was looking for a more secluded place. Accompanied by a lay supporter, he found a secluded forest outside the village of Būndala, in a forest reserve. In the forest, he had a kuṭi built. Due to its proximity to Būndala village, the kuṭi came to be called 'the Būndala Kuṭi'.

At the Būndala Kuṭi, Ven. Nyāṇavīra wrote profusely and also practiced meditation. In his writings, he revealed that one evening, he'd become a sotāpanna while practicing walking meditation. Unfortunately, he suffered from a digestive illness called amoebiasis, as well as issues related to lust. Seeing no way forward in his monastic life, given his situation, he decided to commit suicide. His body was found in the Būndala Kuṭi.

During Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa's early training at Polgasduwa, Ven. Nyāṇavimala left to go on cārikā. He had stayed at Polgasduwa for eleven years. From that time forward, Ven. Nyāṇavimala would spend most of his life wandering on cārikā. With Ven. Nyāṇavimala's gone, Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa lost one of his sources of inspiration. Perhaps as well, a latent wish for solitude pulled him towards the forest. Thus, Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa decided to accept Ven. Nyāṇasumana's invitation to Būndala. In 1969, he moved from Polgasduwa to the area of the Būndala Kuṭi.

At the Būndala Kuṭi, life fell into a steady routine. Ven. Nyāṇasumana and Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa would meet in the morning for piṇḍapāta. After almsround, they would discuss Dhamma, and study Pāli. Even at this early stage, Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa was gaining a good grasp of the Pāli

language. The Dhamma discussions between him and Ven. Nyāṇasumana seem to have gone smoothly and were mutually beneficial.

After his death, Ven. Nyāṇavīra's writings were kept in the Būṇḍala Kuṭi. Ven. Nyāṇasumana took on the task of compiling these writings with Sāmaṇera Bodhesako. They would eventually come to be published in works such as 'Clearing the Path' and 'Notes on the Dhamma'.

Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa also took to Ven. Nyāṇavīra's works. He had first encountered his writings when he visited Ven. Nyāṇasumana in 1968. In the course of studying Ven. Nyāṇavīra's writings, he came to accept his claim that he'd become a sotāpanna. Ven. Nyāṇavīra's thought had a profound impact on Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa. This was so much the case, that he eventually came to regard Ven. Nyāṇavīra as his teacher.

In the afternoon, Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa would go into the Būṇḍala forest. Here, he would practice ānāpānasati (mindfulness of breathing) meditation. He would also engage in study and memorization. When it came time to sleep, he would gather leaves into a pile and spread a robe over them. He would then spend the night on this makeshift mattress.

The Būṇḍala forest was home to many wild animals, including several species of snakes. One of these snakes, the 'Polanga' (or Russell's Viper), is among the deadliest in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, the Polanga can reach about four feet in length. It often has a stout, brown, body, covered with darker diamond-like markings. It resembles a small python with a triangular head. Before long, both Ven. Nyāṇasumana and Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa would have encounters with the Polanga. One of these encounters would end their stay together at Būṇḍala.

Encounters With Polanga

Ven. Nyāṇasumana and M.P. Newton walked away from the kuṭi. It was evening; Newton had come for a visit earlier in the day. He was a close friend and supporter of Ven. Nyāṇasumana's.

Ven. Nyāṇasumana decided not to carry a torch as there was ample moonlight. In one area, there was a tree, which cast a shadow on the ground. In a stroke of bad luck, Ven. Nyāṇasumana stepped into the shadowy area at the same time a Polanga had made its way there. The Polanga bit him on the heel and he fell to the ground. Newton threw the snake away. However, it came back and bit Ven. Nyāṇasumana again on the brow.

Ven. Nyāṇasumana was in great pain. Despite the pain, he managed to walk to the village about a kilometre away. When he arrived in the village, he collapsed. Newton called a local snake doctor who had cured many people before. The doctor said there was nothing he could do. The snake had released most of its poison into Ven. Nyāṇasumana's heel. Ven. Nyāṇasumana fell unconscious and died during the night.

Ven. Nyāṇasumana had received an inauspicious prediction when he was a layman. A ‘Crystal Lady’ had told him that he would die before his 30th birthday. He believed the prediction was accurate. However, he thought that it reflected his future if he had remained a layman. He died not long after his 29th birthday.

Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa moved into the kuṭi after Ven. Nyāṇasumana’s passing. In 1971, he returned to the Island Hermitage for his upasampadā. His preceptor was a Burmese Vinaya teacher named Venerable Nyāninda. Soon after his ordination, he returned to the Būndala Kuṭi.

The ordination lineage at the Island Hermitage came through Ven. Nyāṇatiloka. Ven. Nyāṇatiloka had ordained in the Burmese Sudhamma Nikāya. From that time forward, all of his students were ordained in the Sudhamma Nikāya lineage as well. However, in 1972, it was decided that the Island Hermitage would change to the Vajiraramaya ordination lineage.

Most of the monks at the Island Hermitage re-registered as members of Vajiraramaya. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, and one other monk, were exceptions. He refused to give up his original affiliation with the Sudhamma Nikāya. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's refusal can be seen as evidence of a prominent character trait: he had a strong determination to stick to his principles in the Dhamma.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante returned to the kuṭi after his ordination. Sometimes, he would leave the kuṭi to meditate in the forest. One afternoon, he went to meditate at the root of a tree south of the kuṭi. It was not far from the ocean. He sat down to meditate; however, he soon began to nod. Perhaps the heat contributed to his sleepiness.

As he sat there nodding, a Polanga slithered into his lap and curled up. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante wondered why it had come. He looked around and noticed a bird, which is known to eat Polanga. The snake had slithered into Bhante’s lap to look for safety. It showed no immediate signs of leaving, perhaps because it was afraid of the bird. Although the Polanga was in his lap, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante didn’t feel fear.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante noticed that the bird was coming closer. He quickly turned his head to look. The movement startled the Polanga; it raised its body and began to hiss. It then began to touch various areas of Bhante’s torso with its mouth. At this point, he felt afraid. It would touch an area, retract a bit, then touch an area a little higher. Finally, it reached his forehead and continued upwards. After reaching near the top of his head, the Polanga raised its body further. It then wrapped itself around a nearby tree branch and slithered away.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante would later say that this was his strongest maraṇasati (mindfulness of death) recollection. He had “looked death in the face”. During his encounter with the Polanga, he remained calm and spread mettā. When discussing this encounter with monks, he would later reflect that spreading mettā was the most important thing he did at that time.

Up until his encounter with the Polanga, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had been relatively unafraid of snakes. He used to see them quite often and had become accustomed to them. Living in the forests, he felt that nothing would harm him so long as he practiced meditation and spread mettā. This feeling was perhaps strengthened by the encounter with the Polanga. Unfortunately, in his later years, he would be forced to re-evaluate it.

Alone at Būndala

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante closed the door to the Būndala Kuṭi. With his bowl slung over his shoulder, he made way to the village for piṇḍapāta. Bhante had been living in the kuṭi since Ven. Nyāṇasumana's death in 1970. Many would have found it daunting to stay there, given its history of death, but Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was undeterred.

At the kuṭi, he was in an excellent position to learn Pāli. The Būndala Kuṭi had a good Buddhist library. This was perhaps a result of the efforts of Ven. Nyāṇavīra and Ven. Nyāṇasumana. The Pāli Canon was available, as well as books necessary to learn Pāli. Sāmaṇera Nyāṇadīpa had already learned much of the grammar. Now, he had the opportunity to learn Pāli vocabulary. With these skills, he could study the Tipitaka in its original language.

For the most part, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante lived alone at the kuṭi. Sometimes, he would walk about 180 km northwest to visit Kalugala Aranya. The journey may have taken three or four days. In 1975, he spent one year at Kalugala before returning to the Būndala Kuṭi.

During this period, Bhante developed what would later become the hallmarks of his practice: he lived alone in the forest and used the Tipitaka as his guide. He also kept a practice of not using mosquito nets. As a result, he contracted malaria for the first time. Nevertheless, he continued to avoid the use of mosquito nets. This was the case even later in life, when he lived in the deep forest.

Although Bhante had a solitary character, he did try his hand at living in communities. In the 1970s, Thailand had one of the most well-known forest traditions in the Theravada world. It was a much larger country than Sri Lanka. For Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, this meant greater opportunities to practice in the forest. Thailand was also known as a place where monks had skill in samādhi (concentration). Lured by the possibility of larger forests and drawn by the desire to develop more samādhi, Bhante headed to Thailand in 1978. Here, he would meet one of its greatest masters.

Thailand

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante pulled the book off the shelf. The title read: 'Pāli Metre: A Contribution to the History of Indian Literature'. He had heard about it before, but never had the chance to read it. Soon after arriving in Thailand, Bhante headed to Wat Bowonniwet. The monastery had an

excellent English-language library. This was largely the result of efforts led by Venerable Khantipālo. At Wat Bowonniwet, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had the opportunity to deepen his Pāli knowledge even further.

Wat Bowonniwet or ‘Wat Bowon’, as it was called, was the head monastery of the Dhammayut Nikāya. Before its founding in the early 19th century, standards of monastic discipline in Thailand had fallen to a low. Traditionally, all Thai men spent a period of time as monks, including Thai kings. Prince Mongkut, who would later become King Rama IV, continued this tradition and ordained as a monk. However, he was dismayed by the behaviour he saw in the Thai Sangha. In 1829, while travelling, he met a monk from Thailand’s ethnic Mon community. Inspired by his conduct, he decided to re-ordain with the Thai Mon community in 1833. That same year, Prince Mongkut (now Vajiranyāṇo Bhikkhu) founded the Dhammayut Nikāya.

Vajiranyāṇo Bhikkhu’s brother, King Rama III, complained about his involvement with an ethnic minority community. So, he built Wat Bowon as an alternative residence. In 1836, Prince Mongkut arrived at Wat Bowonniwet and became its first abbot. Thereafter, Wat Bowon served as the administrative head of the Dhammayut order.

From the start, the Dhammayut order was a reform movement with a strong focus on the study and practice of the Vinaya (monastic discipline). Vajiranyāṇo Bhikkhu thought that it was impossible to attain Nibbāna in his day and age. He did feel, however, that there was great merit to be made in the practice of the Vinaya.

The Dhammayut order eventually became the most strict in Thailand. Monks could devote time to the study of the Vinaya. However, the practice of meditation was not the central feature of monastic life.

In the late 1800s, a monk named Ajahn Sao was inspired by the conduct of the Dhammayut monks. He was originally part of the Mahā Nikāya order. However, he decided to convert to the Dhammayut order, along with his entire monastery. Unusual for the time, Ajahn Sao devoted himself to the practice of meditation. He also wandered in the forests and hills. After wandering along the forest tracks, he would spend the night in the forest and go piṇḍapāṭa in the village.

In 1893, a young man named Mun ordained in the Dhammayut Nikāya. He went to stay at Ajahn Sao’s monastery, which was just outside his hometown. He took Ajahn Sao as his teacher. He followed Ajahn Sao on his wanderings in the forest and eventually began to wander on his own. Both Ajahn Mun and Ajahn Sao became famed for their meditation practice. Ajahn Mun had many students who followed his methods. The results that they gained from their practice had a strong influence on Thai Buddhist culture. Their achievements were such that they were able to overturn the strongly-held belief that Nibbāna was no longer possible to achieve in the modern era. The tradition that Ajahn Sao and Ajahn Mun founded came to be called the ‘Thai Forest Tradition’.

Ajahn Mun passed away in 1949. After his passing, many of his disciples became distinguished teachers in their own right. Due to a large number of active teachers, as well as growing respect for the tradition in the country, forest monasticism was at a high point by the time Nyāṇadīpa Bhante arrived. Wat Bowon was an ‘entry point’ monastery. Foreigners who wished to join the Dhammayut branch of the Thai Forest Tradition would often start at Wat Bowon.

It was to Wat Bowon that Nyāṇadīpa Bhante first came when he arrived in Thailand. It seems that some of the monks at Wat Bowon had already heard of him. His reputation as a forest ascetic had already spread, even at this early stage.

At Wat Bowon, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante met Guttasīla Bhante. The meeting began a friendship that would last more than forty years. Guttasīla Bhante was originally from New Zealand and had ordained at Wat Bowon in 1976. Wat Bowon was located in the city of Bangkok. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante preferred to live in the forest. So, despite its well-stocked library, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante left Wat Bowon to seek out Thailand’s forests.

Another well-known entry-point for the Thai Forest Tradition was the group of monasteries founded by Venerable Ajahn Chah Subhaddo in Ubon Ratchathani. Ajahn Chah was a charismatic and revered teacher, who was regarded as a disciple of Ajahn Mun. His teaching had a special appeal to Westerners. An international monastery had been founded for his Western disciples in 1975. This monastery was located outside the village of Bung Wai and was known as ‘Wat Bung Wai’.

On his travels in Thailand, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante visited Ajahn Chah’s monastery, Wat Nong Pah Pong. Here, he saw Ajahn Chah himself, who was at full teaching strength in those days. Ajahn Chah was sweeping leaves. Bhante thought that his demeanour was a bit careless. Ajahn Chah picked up on Bhante’s judgemental attitude and began to sweep in an even more disorderly fashion. Unfortunately, Bhante did not take Ajahn Chah’s lesson. He left the monastery unimpressed. Years later, when Bhante learned more about Ajahn Chah, he developed a great respect for him. In addition to visiting Wat Pah Pong, Bhante also stayed at a branch monastery called ‘Wat Tam Seng Pet’ and spent time at Wat Bung Wai.

There is an emphasis on communal life in Ajahn Chah’s monasteries. Bhikkhus are expected to perform many activities together. As a group, bhikkhus look to their relationship with a teacher as one of their primary avenues of learning. Also, many aspects of the monks’ deportment — such as the wearing of robes — are standardized. Bhikkhus are also expected to study little and devote much of their time to meditation.

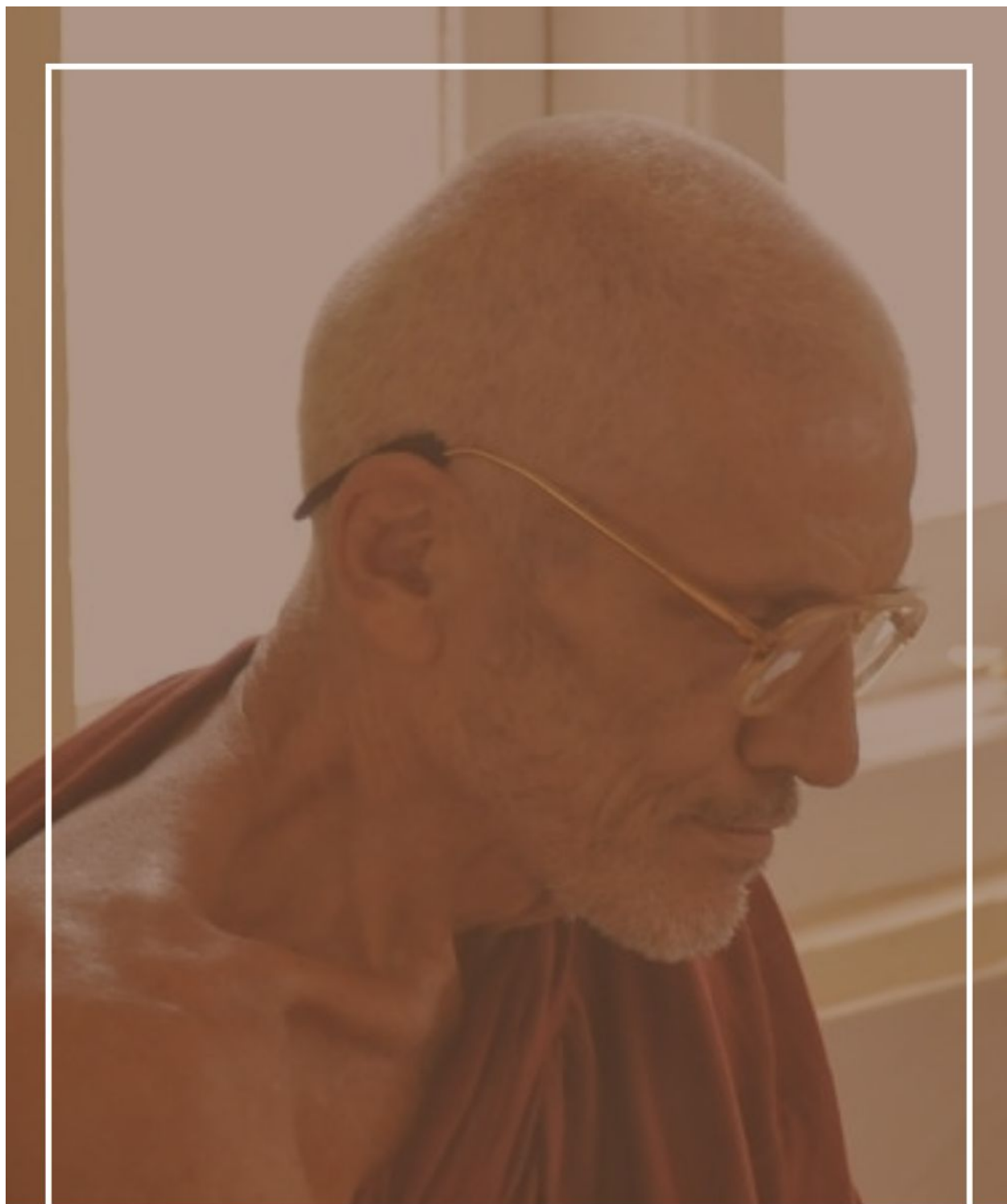
Nyāṇadīpa Bhante found that the communal atmosphere was not a good fit for him. He preferred to live in solitude. He confirmed that he was not looking for a strong teacher-student relationship; instead, he would primarily take the Buddha’s words, in the Pāli canon, as his teacher. Also, although he liked to meditate, study was an important component of his practice.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante left Ajahn Chah's group of monasteries in Ubon and made his way Northwest to Chiang Mai. Having travelled around Thailand, he came to realize that much of Thailand's once impressive forest cover had been lost. From 1945 to 1975, Thailand's forest cover declined from 61% to 34% of its landmass, largely driven by agricultural expansion.

In Chiang Mai, he stayed at Wat Phrathat near the city of Chomthong. The abbot, Ajahn Wimalo, gave him a lot of independence. He was more or less able to spend his day in solitude.

The situation was good enough for Bhante to practice. However, he came to reflect that since he was basically living the same lifestyle that he'd lived in Sri Lanka, he might as well return. He hadn't found what he was looking for in Thailand. Much of the forest cover had been destroyed. In addition, he would later relate that his intention to develop samādhi "didn't last long".

Bhante stayed in Thailand for about eight months. He returned to Sri Lanka in 1979. He knew the language and the culture in Sri Lanka. It was here that his mode of practice fit and it was here, in the middle phase of his life, that he would make his greatest contributions to the Sri Lankan forest tradition.



Pāriyatti | Study

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Suttas: General Advice

☸ When asked about how a monk should spend his time, Bhante replied: “It’s important to read the suttas and best if one can read them in Pāli.”

☸ Regarding the suttas, Bhante said: “Reading the suttas in Pāli is like listening to the Buddha himself.”

☸ “When one learns Pāli, sometimes one will be meditating and the meaning of a verse will become clear. That’s the difference between scholars and meditators.”

☸ “The purpose of the suttas is to describe our world of experience, not to describe a pure science. Pure science doesn’t even seem to exist. When physicists look for real molecules, they find they’re made of electrons. They even have trouble determining what electrons are. Sometimes, they can be measured as a wave and sometimes as a particle. It sometimes seems there’s nothing there. So, even this idea of ‘matter’ isn’t so easy to prove in physics.”

Suttas: Authenticity and Interpretation

☸ One monk asked about the authenticity of the Pāli canon. He related that there were some stories, especially in the Dīgha Nikāya, which seemed hard to grasp. Bhante confirmed that there were probably inauthentic suttas in the Pāli Canon. However, referring to some of the stories in the Canon, Bhante said: “One has to look for the Dhamma aspect of them. If one looks for the Dhamma aspect, then one is always safe.”

☸ “In the early days, when the suttas were first recorded, the people transmitting them were arahants and so their knowledge was not just limited to the words of the sutta. They personally understood the meaning as well.”

☸ “Some of the long stories in the Dīgha Nikāya are hard to believe. Some of the books in the Khuddaka Nikāya seem like they’re later additions as well, such as the Jātakas and the Cāriyapitaka.”

☸ “There are six books in the Khuddaka Nikāya that seem as though they’re the word of the Buddha: The Udāna, The Itivuttaka, the Dhammapāda, the Sutta Nipāta, the Theragāthā, and the Therīgāthā.”¹

☸ When asked which Pāli text edition he liked best, Bhante said that he liked the PTS edition best. He said that the motive of the PTS was to find the original meaning of the suttas. He felt that other editions were more likely to re-work the Pāli to bring it in line with the commentaries². Bhante seemed to particularly like the PTS versions of the first two books of the Majjhima Nikāya.

☸ When asked about the various English translations of the suttas, he said, “Some of the translations can be far off. Things got better when Bhikkhu Bodhi came along, but still, to know the suttas in Pāli is best. The meaning becomes very clear.”

☸ “In some suttas, there may be flaws in the Pāli. In most cases, they can be repaired by comparison to other suttas. There are very few where the meaning is lost. One example is the phrase in the Anguttara, which says to develop fear towards all saṅkhāras as to a murderer with an upraised sword.

(Bhante described different suttas, which use the metaphor of the murderer with an upraised sword. One sutta recommends that one develop dispassion as to a murderer with an upraised sword. Bhante related that suttas such as this were obviously incorrect. He felt that the sutta recommending fear as to a murderer with an upraised sword was correct.) He said: “Obviously, one has fear towards a murderer with an upraised sword³.”

Definitions

☸ *Nāma*: “Nāma includes vedana (feeling), saññā (perception), and saṅkhāra (formations), but not viññāna (consciousness)⁴. Viññāna is what’s aware. The commentaries include viññāna under name, but in the suttas, that’s not the case.”

☸ *Resistance Contact vs. Designation Contact*⁵: (Regarding resistance contact) “Take this chair, for example. It is made up of the four elements. There is solidity in the chair... and so it resists our attempts to perceive it otherwise. Because there is this resistance in conjunction with our sense faculties, we are able to perceive it using saññā, sankāra, and viññāna⁶ in the name group.

“(Designation contact) is our ability to perceive... Resistance contact depends on designation contact⁷.”

☸ *Cetovimutti vs. Paññāvimutti*: “Cetovimutti is used to eliminate lust. Paññāvimutti is used to eliminate ignorance⁸. Both are present in the mind of an arahant. Both are also present at the time of a noble attainment. Some develop the paññā aspect first. Some develop the samādhi aspect first.”

(Bhante went on to quote a sutta or suttas referring to arahants liberated in both ways⁹).

“Cetovimutti can have both broad and narrow meanings. For an arahant liberated in both ways, it has the specific meaning that they have gone through all of the levels of samādhī.”

🌀 *Papañca*: An upāsaka asked Bhante how to translate ‘papañca’. It is often translated as ‘proliferation’. Bhante replied: “I translated it as ‘expansion’. There are different kinds of papañca. One type is ‘kilesa papañca’; another is the papañca of the sense bases. One starts from the senses and expands from that to fill out all experience.

“Arahants are free of kilesa papañca, but even having six sense bases is a type of papañca. When an arahant attains parinibbāna, that’s the end of papañca.”

(Bhante quoted a portion AN 4.173. An excerpt is reproduced below.)

[Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita:] “Being asked if, with the remainderless fading & cessation of the six contact-media, there is anything else, you say, ‘Don’t say that, my friend.’ Being asked if... there is not anything else... there both is & is not anything else... there neither is nor is not anything else, you say, ‘Don’t say that, my friend.’ Now, how is the meaning of your words to be understood?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “The statement, ‘With the remainderless fading & cessation of the six contact-media, is it the case that there is anything else?’ objectifies the unobjectified. The statement, ‘... is it the case that there is not anything else... is it the case that there both is & is not anything else... is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?’ objectifies the unobjectified. However far the six contact-media go, that is how far objectification goes. However far objectification goes, that is how far the six contact-media go. With the remainderless fading & cessation of the six contact-media, there comes to be the cessation of objectification, the stilling of objectification.”¹⁰

🌀 *Āsavas*: “Āsava can mean both inflow and outflow. ‘Taints’ is a word that gets used, but it’s not strong enough. It means something that penetrates, and pervades one’s whole being. It’s like a pollution; a very root defilement.

“It can also refer to the discharge from a sore. The āsavas overlap with the kilesas in some respects. Kāmāsava (the pollution of sensuality) and bhāvāsava (the pollution of becoming) are related to craving. Avijjāsava (the pollution of ignorance) is related to delusion.

“The āsavas are what make one a ‘being’.”

🌀 A Canadian sāmaṇera asked Bhante how he would personally define wisdom, compassion, and courage...

Wisdom: “Wisdom is knowing how to see causes and what brings them to an end.”

Compassion: "When one understands suffering, then one understands that there is no being that is not in need of compassion."

Courage: "The highest courage is the courage that allows one to let go of self, but there are other types of courage as well."

All Religions Equal

☸ *At one Dhamma discussion, the Māhāparinibbāna sutta¹¹ came up. In this sutta, the Buddha says there are only true recluses in his religion. This means that stream enterers, once returners, non-returners and arahants are only found in the Buddha's religion. The discussion continued...*

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: "In India, there's a tendency to say that all religions are equally valid."

Monk: "My understanding is that in India, to combat the Buddha's teachings, Hinduism, and other schools took the Buddha's teachings and incorporated them into their doctrines. If someone from another religion took the Buddha's teachings and incorporated them into their doctrines, could they realize stream-entry?"

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: "I don't think Hinduism has taken enough. They're still looking for a self. Mahāyāna and Tibetan Buddhism might have enough Dhamma in their religions. Although, one has to dig down to find it. So, one could become a Chinese (Mahāyāna) arahant, or a Tibetan (Vajrayāna) arahant."

"Other religions are looking for permanence in a self. Only in Buddhism does one look for peace in the ending of conditions. Giving up everything — that is the only safety."

Suicide

☸ "There are three cases of monastic suicide in the canon — Venerable Vakkhāli, Venerable Channa, and Venerable Godhika. All three were very advanced in their practice. They may have even reached arahattamagga.¹²

"They had chronic or terminal illnesses that were so severe that they couldn't fulfill the Buddha's teaching. So, they thought to end their life, and practice for phala in their last moments. These are rare cases in the Canon. For normal people to commit suicide would be a mistake."

Devas

☸ Regarding consciousness and name and form being codependent: “This is the case even in the deva realms. Devas have a subtle type of form, except for the formless realms.”

☸ “There are beings with the same body. Some devas have bodies made of light. When they come together, they become one mass of light.”

☸ “Some beings are born into a perceptionless state. There, they have form, but not perception or consciousness. Perception and consciousness are only temporarily gone.”

☸ “There’s no dukkha there (in the perceptionless state). One is perceptionless, but the state is temporary because consciousness is still bound up with name and form. They (name and form) lie dormant; and so, it’s not equivalent to Nibbāna.”

☸ As Bhante’s illness progressed, he began to have chronic pain. Monks started to give him massages, to help manage the pain. Bhante had recurring pain in his right ribcage from an old fall. Once, when a monk was giving Bhante a massage, he smiled, and laughed softly. When the monk asked him why, he described how he’d been injured: “It was raining, and I was making my way down a large rock, when I slipped and fell off. There were many rocks below, but I landed like this (with his body in an ‘S’ shape). There was a rock here (in front of his chest), and here (behind his back). My umbrella landed so that it was right next to my hand.”

☸ In the Tanjantenna area, there is typically heavy rain from roughly late February into May. As the rains started, Bhante warned the monks that if it rained heavily, he may have to cancel the Dhamma discussions. Bhante held Dhamma discussions on Thursdays at 4pm. Monastics would anticipate the chance to discuss the Dhamma with Bhante. One afternoon, heavy rain was scheduled on the same day the Dhamma discussion was to take place. Thankfully, no rain came.

After the discussion finished, attendees told Bhante that heavy rain had been scheduled, but somehow hadn’t come. They joked that the devas had helped. One monk said that the devas wanted to listen. Bhante laughed as well and said, “That may be so.” The attendees got up and began to leave. Just as they were about to descend the steps from Bhante’s kuṭi, there was a crack of thunder, and it started to rain heavily.

Khandhas

☸ When asked if one should look at the khandhas sequentially, Bhante replied: “The khandhas don’t work sequentially in experience. When one sees a form and notices its shape, saññā (perception) is already operating¹³. Saṅkhāras (mental formations) are what weaves everything (the experience) together.”

☸ When asked whether saṅkhāras can be controlled, Bhante replied: “Yes, control is a saṅkhāra. You can use a saṅkhāra to control other saṅkhāras. But, the fact that all saṅkhāras are anicca, dukkha, and anatta — that, one can’t control. They are always anicca.”

Dependent Origination

☸ “The four noble truths and dependent origination are different ways of looking at the same thing.”

☸ *Monk*: “Does dependent origination describe one life or multiple lives? There are different ideas about it.”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It can be both. The suttas frequently reference more than one life. Obviously, there is birth (re-birth) in the dependent origination links. The links of contact, feeling, craving, clinging, and becoming are something that one can observe in this life.

“When one observes (dependent origination) in this life, when one sees it truly — not just philosophizing, but observes it in one’s own experience — then one learns to make a true inference: this process applies not just to this life, but to other lives as well.

...Bhante quoted SN 12.33 (likely in Pāli, from memory). This sutta describes how a bhikkhu comes to gain insight into ageing and death. From this, he makes an inference that ascetics and brahmins in the past would have understood ageing and death in the same way he has. Likewise, with the future....

“One learns to make a true inference. One gains understanding, and it extends to all of saṃsāra¹⁴.”

Miscellaneous

☸ In some suttas, *avijjā* (ignorance) is given as the cause of suffering. In others, *taṇhā* (craving) is given as the cause of suffering. When asked about this, Bhante replied: “They’re describing the same thing. *Asmi māna* (the conceit ‘I am’) is a type of craving. One has that craving because of ignorance; because of not seeing things properly. Practically speaking, one will be working with craving the most, as it’s easier to see.”

☸ “One can use craving and desire to overcome craving and desire.”

☸ “*Rāga* (lust) and *dosa* (hatred) are linked together.”

☸ When discussing the practical aspects of the Dhamma with Bhante, he would often touch on *cittānupassana*¹⁵. It seems he took up the practice of *cittānupassana* later in his life as a *bhikkhu*.

Consciousness

☸ In the *Abhidhamma*, consciousness is described as a series of discrete moments. One monk asked about this and Bhante replied: “It’s not so much a series of discrete moments, it also has a stream-like effect. The faculty of seeing, hearing, etc. can be more stream-like. There’s no need to get too philosophical. In your meditation, you don’t have to see these discrete moments of consciousness.”

Consciousness vs. Name and Form

☸ “There is always an element of name and form together with consciousness (in experience). They require each other to stand.”

☸ *Monk*: “In dependent origination, it seems that the way rebirth takes place is that name and form and consciousness are dependent on one another. I’m confused as to why these things revolve around each other and cause rebirth.”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “The suttas don’t use the word ‘revolve’. They’re dependent on each other. Venerable *Sāriputta* gives the simile of the two sheaves of reeds leaning against one another¹⁶. There’s consciousness, which is the knowing aspect. There’s also name and form. Name includes the mental *khandhas*, except for consciousness. Name and form and consciousness cannot exist without one another. Like two sheaves of reeds, if you take one away, the other will

fall. Consciousness cannot exist without an object. It comes into existence as a result of contact between an external object and an internal sense faculty¹⁷”

☸ “You don’t have to think of them (consciousness and name and form) as two separate things. In Pāli, they use the word, ‘bhūta’, which means what has come to be, and in our world of experience, what has come to be can be described as name and form together with consciousness.”

☸ “Name and form cannot be separated; that’s why it’s a compound word (nāma-rūpa)¹⁸.”

☸ “Before consciousness descends into the mother’s womb, it’s sustained by a type of craving. There may be a fine kind of form associated with that consciousness.

“After consciousness descends into the mother’s womb, name and form develop. This is a type of organic matter. It starts as cells, and grows and spreads. This depends on consciousness because if consciousness didn’t descend into the womb, name and form would not grow.¹⁹”

☸ *Nyāṇadīpa Bhante*: “In the ārupa (formless) realms, there is only consciousness and the name elements — vedana, saṅkhāra, and saññā.”

Monk: “Does that mean that the interdependence of name and form and consciousness is a teaching specific to humans?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “In the ārupa realms, there will be elements of name and form, but it would not be explicit (as it is in the human realm).”

Mano vs. Viññāṇa

☸ When asked about the difference between ‘mano’ and ‘viññāṇa’, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante replied: “Mano can have a physical aspect. You need the brain for memory, and other parts of the body are involved as well, such as the spine. Mano is the base.

“Mano viññāṇa’ is the knowing of what they call ‘dhamma’²⁰. Mano viññāṇa pulls in the other five senses. It’s a special kind of consciousness that weaves together the consciousness of the other sense bases such as the eye, the ear and the nose (as well as the tongue and the body). It knows ‘dhammas’ (ideas), but it also has this aspect of unifying the five senses.”

Consciousness as an Element

☸ “Consciousness, space, earth, fire, water, and wind are dhātus (elements). Consciousness is a dhātu²¹ because it has a type of independent existence²². Form has this element of resistance, in that it resists our efforts to change it. Consciousness has this element as well. It’s called a dhātu because it links together the past and the future. This is where memory is found. As long as there is craving and clinging, name and form are always conjoined with the consciousness dhātu.”

☸ “It’s not just consciousness which is involved in connecting memory to the past and the future, other saṅkhāras are involved as well. They’re all bound up in the process of creating memories.”

Referring to his own consciousness, and its connection to the past and the future, Bhante pointed at a monk sitting on the floor and said: “You’re sitting here; next moment, you’re not sitting over there.”

Anidassana Viññāṇa

☸ “Arahants have a special type of consciousness called ‘anidassana viññāṇa’ (attributeless consciousness). This is a type of consciousness which has cut its attachment to the material world, although it still connects to the past and the future. This is the reason that an arahant can accept an invitation to a dāna and he can say what he’s going to do tomorrow. But, there are no defilements in his consciousness, no upadāna, and so it’s called anidassana (attributeless).

“It’s like someone trying to paint shapes in space. There’s nothing to draw on. One always needs name and form together with consciousness to have something to paint on.”²³

☸ “Arahants can have different personalities because they still have a viññāṇa, which connects them to the past and the future. So, it’s possible that an arahant like Māhamoggallāna could develop more psychic powers. In Sāriputta’s case, in his Theragāthā, he said that he didn’t have any desire to develop psychic powers.”

☸ *Monk*: “What’s to stop someone from calling anidassana viññāṇa a ‘self’?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It can’t be called a ‘self’. When one is engaged in ‘I making’ and ‘my making’, one is attached to something that one is becoming now, has been in the past, or will be in the future. When one doesn’t have these attachments, it (anidassana viññāna) can’t be called a self. There’s really nothing that can be said about it at all.”

☸ “The consciousness of all arahants is the same. The Buddha’s anidassana viññāna is the same as Venerable Māhamoggallāna’s or Venerable Sāriputta’s. They’ve been rid of defilements to the same degree.”

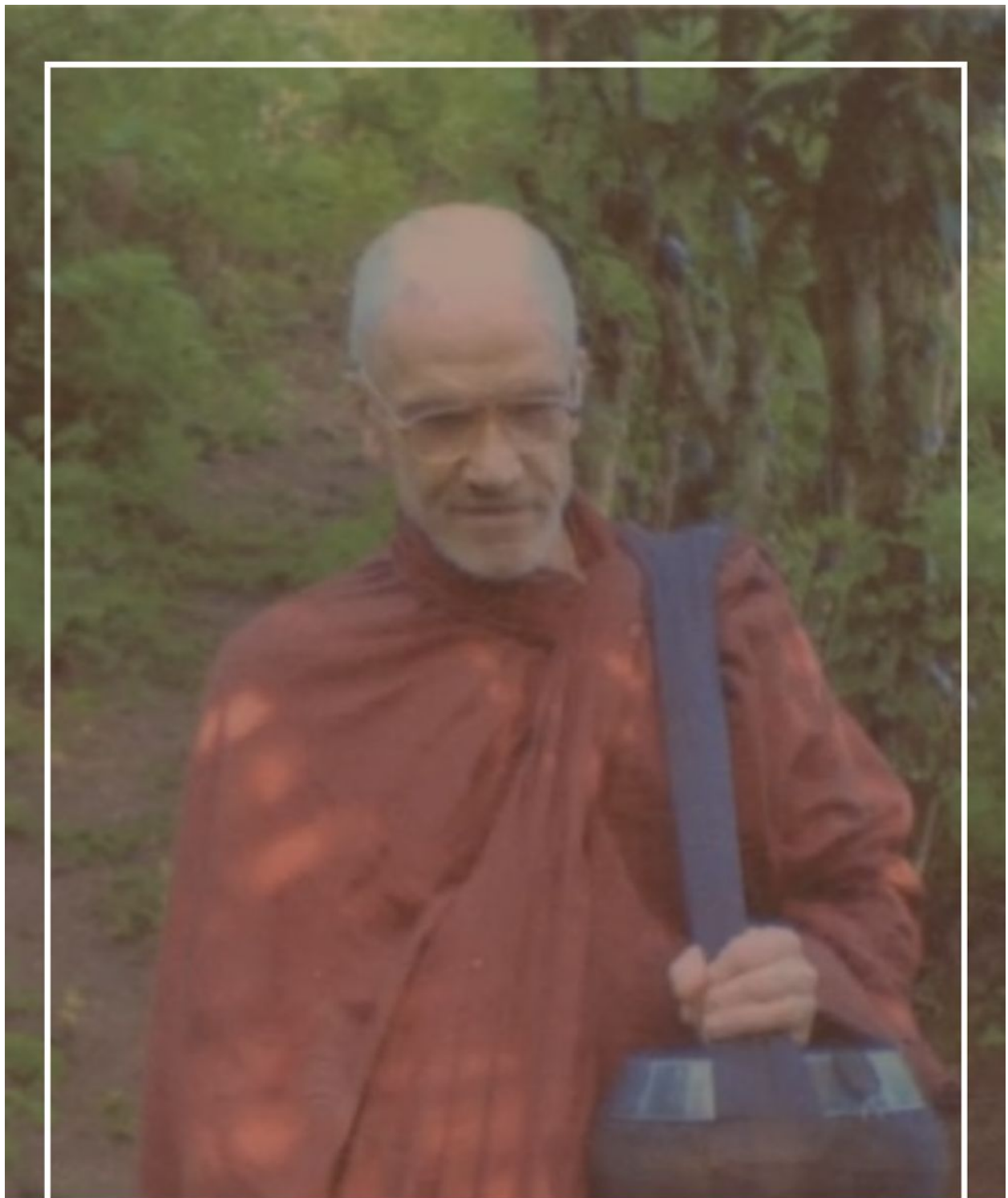
☸ “It (anidassana viññāna) wouldn’t be a group consciousness. They²⁴ are individual consciousnesses, but you can’t say they’re individual selves. They’re individual persons — ariyapuggalas²⁵ — but they’re not selves.”

☸ One monk asked Bhante about Majjhima Nikāya 49. In this sutta, it states that anidassana viññāna is not known through the four elements or through the allness of the all. Since this is the case, he asked if anidassana viññāna could be equated with Nibbāna. Bhante replied: “The main sutta discussing that (anidassana viññāna) is the Kevaddha sutta²⁶. I mainly refer to that sutta. There, it says that consciousness has no footing. It’s more clear.

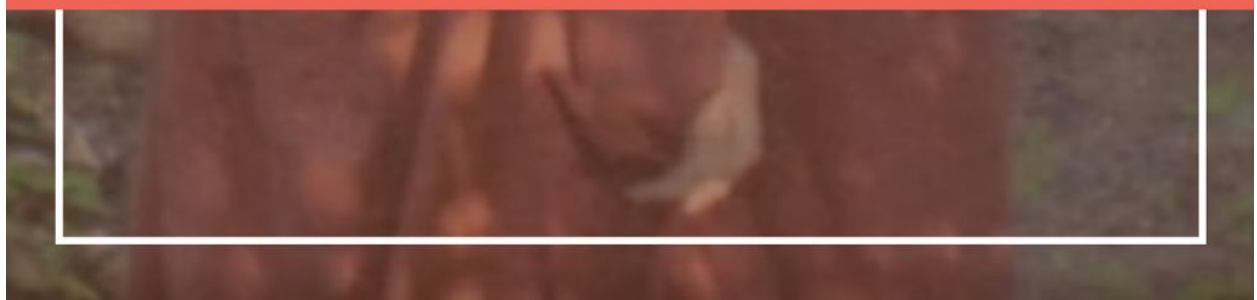
“This refers to an arahant’s experience of consciousness: nothing has a footing in it. That is the reason he can’t be seen by devas or anyone with abhiñña... I don’t agree that it would be equivalent to Nibbāna.”

☸ When asked if anidassana viññāna disbands at death, Bhante replied: “Yes. It is impermanent. That is the reason devas can’t see where an arahant’s consciousness is established. Consciousness always has to be linked together with name and form.”

☸ Regarding the after-death state of an arahant, Bhante said: “Language is impermanent. That’s as far as language can go. So, with the death of an arahant, there’s nothing to describe.”



Middle Life



Middle Life

Singharājā Forest

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante walked through the rubber plantation. One can imagine the leaves crackling softly as he made his way between the rows of trees. Eventually, the trees may have given way. Bhante looked up to notice an immense forest. He felt an immediate attraction. Although he had stayed in the Būndala Kuṭi for several years, this moment made an impression. He instinctively knew that the forest was the right place for him.

In 1979, Bhante returned from Thailand. Having stayed at the Būndala Kuṭi for about eight years total, he was looking to settle into a new kuṭi. He knew several dāyakas who were associated with the Nyāṇavīra tradition. Therefore, he could potentially have a kuṭi built on several different properties. After touring the properties, he ended up moving to the town of Bulathsinghala, on a rubber estate belonging to Mr. Dudley Fernando. There was a river and a large forest nearby.

Mr. Fernando built a kuṭi for Bhante and he stayed for one year. While living at the rubber estate, Bhante began to scout the forest nearby. Eventually, he found a habitable cave and took up residence. Sometimes, he would walk sixty or so kilometres to visit Kalugala Aranya. After the visit, he would return.

Bhante stayed in the cave kuṭi for about seven months. While he was living there, a monk from the local pansala told him that the Singharājā forest was the largest in the area. Attracted by the possibility of a larger forest, Bhante decided to go to Singharājā.

Bhante walked southwest from Bulathsinghala to Kalugala Aranya. Although there were estates, there was still quite a lot of virgin forest. From Kalugala, he walked southeast, following the logging roads to the Singharājā forest.

The Singharājā Forest Reserve was originally part of a larger forest area. The area which became the reserve was the part of the forest which was protected. A substantial portion of the reserve had been logged as well. However, the government put a stop to it. Loggers had made roads outside, in the unprotected portion of the forest. Bhante followed these roads as he walked, venturing deeper into the wilderness.

Eventually, he reached a village called 'pita-kaelle', which means 'back of the forest'. It was the last village before the protected portion of the Singharājā forest. A river ran through the village. About a half hour's walk from the village, the river became a border. On the far side of the river was the strictly protected forest. It was not allowable to construct a kuṭi there. Therefore, Bhante

had a kuṭi built on the near side of the river. It was about as deep as one could legally stay in the Singharājā forest.

It was here in the Singharājā forest that Bhante started to build his signature three-wall kuṭis. The pita-kaelle kuṭi was his first three-wall kuṭi. Bhante loved the forest and a three-walled kuṭi brought him into closer contact with nature. It would not have been too far removed from living at the root of a tree. Bhante built the walls of the kuṭi from mud. He made the roof from leaves. He had a way of interlacing the leaves to prevent water from coming through the roof.

Bhante stayed in the pita-kaelle kuṭi for two years. In 1983, he crossed over the Singharājā forest to Watugala village. There was a mountain near the village. Partway up the mountain was a shrine with some basic buildings. Villagers would go to this shrine on uposatha days to observe the eight precepts.

Bhante climbed up the mountain from the shrine. As he climbed, he was treated to a view so beautiful it could bring tears to his eyes. An enormous banyan tree had fallen from the top of a rock ledge. In falling, it knocked down many trees below. This contributed to a chain reaction. One falling tree struck another, somewhat like dominoes. As a result, roughly an acre of the forest below the ledge was cleared, leaving an unobstructed view below. Bhante looked out over the Singharājā forest. There was wilderness as far as the eye could see. He knew there wasn't a single person living in this large wilderness area.

Bhante had a bed made underneath the ledge. It was constructed with strong branches. The mattress covering was made with sheets of tree bark. He stayed there for about six months.

Unfortunately, towards the end of his stay, another monk moved into the shrine area. He was senior to Bhante and started to control his piṇḍapāta. Because of this, Bhante began to lose his independence. So, despite his love of the location, he decided to leave.

This was an important aspect of Bhante's practice. If conditions became unfavourable, he would change locations. Bhante was looking for solitude and independence. For these things, he would continue his search. It was a search that would bear fruit before long.

A Search For Solitude

Bhante crossed the border into Wilpattu national park. One can imagine him wandering out in the early morning. He may have taken breakfast in his kuṭi and carried more food into the park. Inside the park, he'd found some caves used by the Sangha in ancient times. Ancient cave dwellings in Sri Lanka can be identified by drip ledges. These were chiselled into the rock to guide rainwater away from the bhikkhus dwelling inside. Sometimes, they were sponsored by donors, who had their names etched in the rock wall above the cave.

The ancient caves would have given some welcome shade as the sun reached its zenith. Wilpattu National Park is in the Anuradhapura area. The Anuradhapura area is one of the hottest in Sri Lanka. Bhante used to spend time in these caves during the day. When the sun became less intense, he may have headed out to explore more of the park. However, he couldn't stay too long; he had to be out of the park by nightfall.

Wilpattu National Park had a healthy elephant population. Sometimes, while meditating outdoors, Bhante would hear the steps of an elephant approaching. He would continue meditating, and eventually, it would back off and depart. Once, an elephant walked past his kuṭi and brushed the wall. The kuṭi was small, and the elephant so close that Bhante could have reached out and touched it. In this way, Bhante became used to elephants²⁷.

Bhante had come to stay near Wilpattu National Park after departing from the Singharājā forest. Once again, he had a kuṭi built on the border of the park. In Wilpattu, Bhante built a very simple kuṭi. Both the walls and roof were made out of leaves. However, he came down with health problems. The weather was too hot, and the water was impure. He began to have digestive issues, and so he left for Colombo to seek treatment.

In Colombo, he stayed at Vajiraramaya. Here, he met his friend, Guttasīla Bhante, who was preparing for a trip back to New Zealand. Vajiraramaya was a renowned temple. The famous missionary monk Venerable Narada had been the abbot there. He had passed away two years earlier, in 1982. Venerable Narada had translated the Dhammapada into English, and written the popular book "Buddhism in a Nutshell". By the end of his life, Ven. Narada's missionary works would take him to every continent except Antarctica. He had established good standards of Vinaya at the monastery. During his time as the abbot, he forbade monks from using money.

Another famous monk, Venerable Piyadassi was living at Vajiraramaya. Ven. Piyadassi also travelled widely. He would become the Sinhala editor of the Buddhist Publication Society. He was also a spiritual friend to the famous American monk, Bhikkhu Bodhi. Ven. Piyadassi spoke excellent English and was sympathetic towards Westerners. It was a good place to stay.

In Colombo, Bhante was diagnosed with amoebiasis. He continued to stay at Vajiraramaya while receiving treatment. While in Colombo, he thought to himself, "Where is a large forest I could stay?" Looking on a map, he noticed Gal Oya National Park on the eastern side of Bibile.

After his amoebiasis was cured, he was invited to a dāna in the area of the Būndala Kuṭi. From the Būndala area, he set out walking on cārikā. Eventually, he arrived at the Bibile area — a distance of roughly 130 kilometres.

The Bibile area was known for being inhabited by the Vedda people. The Vedda are Sri Lanka's indigenous people. From genetic studies, it appears that they arrived in Sri Lanka 30,000 to 40,000 years ago. They were Sri Lanka's sole human inhabitants before the Sinhalese arrived in roughly 500 B.C.

Bhante stayed with the Vedda for a short time. Following this, he headed northeast about 60-70 kilometres, until he reached the Maha Veili river. He crossed the Maha Veili river near Wasgamuwa National Park.

Bhante arrived in the Wasgamuwa area in 1984. It was raining heavily when he arrived. He tried to stay in the forest, but the local people wouldn't allow him. They said there was too much rain. However, they told him about an area called Himbiliyakada, a little further south. The forest near Himbiliyakada was connected to Wasgamuwa National Park. Heading south, Bhante missed Himbiliyakada and ended up at the village of Iryagasulpota.

Iryagasulpota is located in an area called Laggala. There was a network of villages in the Laggala forest area. The villagers had intermarried, and there was an incredible kinship between them. They were often materially poor but could be very rich in faith in the Dhamma.

When he arrived, Bhante spent the first night in a wagon shed. After his night in the wagon shed, he camped in the forest. The local people were very enthusiastic in their support. At the time they had a lot of work to do. They were preparing for the upcoming farming season. Despite this, they offered to build him a kuṭi. They were unsure what to make of Bhante's robes, however. Bhante wore dark-coloured forest monk's robes. The villagers thought that all monks wore bright orange robes.

In what was to become a typical pattern, Bhante stayed in the forest and scouted out a good location for a kuṭi. When he had found a good location, the local people eventually helped him to construct a three-walled kuṭi.

In many ways, the Laggala forest area fit Bhante's needs perfectly. The forest itself is quite remote. It is bordered by Wasgamuwa National Park to the north. To the east is the Mahaveli River and to the south and west are the Kandy and Matale hills.

Here, Bhante found an area rich in solitude, with a vast forest. His timing was fortunate. The year before, violent conflict had begun between the Sinhalese and Tamils. It would soon escalate into a bitterly-fought civil war. Bhante had found a place where he could practice in safety. At Laggala, he could also develop his unique approach to solitary monastic living. It was an approach that would gain adherents.

Laggala

Several monks sat on the floor with their hands in añjali. It was the full moon day and they had gathered together for a recitation of the monastic rules. There are 227 primary monastic rules in the monks' disciplinary code. Tonight, they would be recited from memory. Following the

recitation, the monks would discuss kuṭi problems. When these practical matters were finished, monks eventually gathered for a Dhamma discussion. The discussion would last until dawn.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was the centre of the Dhamma discussion. However, others also had input. The most senior among them was a Sinhalese monk named Sankiccha Bhante. He knew Pāli quite well and had some interesting insights to discuss. There were also experienced foreign monks. Guttasīla Bhante was from New Zealand, Venerable Visarādo was from Australia, and Venerable Bodhipālo was from England. The monks were from different sects. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante made it a point that all the monks who came to stay at Laggala could consider themselves to be in unity regardless of their nikāya (sect). Together, they shared their knowledge of the Dhamma. The following day, each would head back to the solitude of their kuṭis in the Laggala forest. In another four months, the community would meet again.

The Laggala community had grown slowly since Bhante arrived in 1984. Bhante spent 1985 alone. He scouted out a different location and had another kuṭi built. Bhante would build kuṭis very far apart. They were often in distinct areas and depended on different villages for alms.

In 1986, Ven. Kovida came. Ven. Kovida was an American monk. He had ordained under Venerable Mātara Sri Nyāṇārāma Mahāthera and Venerable Kaḍavadduve Jinavamsa Mahāthera. Together, Ven. Nyāṇārāma and Ven. Jinavamsa had founded the Galduwa group of monasteries. This was to become the most strict forest tradition in modern Sri Lanka.

Venerable Kovida was the first foreigner to ordain in the Galduwa tradition. He showed an impressive aptitude for the Buddha's teachings. As a sāmaṇera, he read the entire Vinaya Pitaka. In the Galduwa tradition at the time, higher ordination ceremonies were only held every two years. However, Venerable Kovida impressed his teachers so much that they arranged a special higher ordination ceremony for him.

After his ordination, Ven. Kovida took on strict observances. He gave up the use of pillows and tried to keep items in his kuṭi to a minimum. When he brought a new item in, his practice was to throw an old item out.

He made an effort to be mindful at all times. His comportment was inspiring. He seems to have made an impression on many of the people he met. Both monks and laypeople regarded him with great respect.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante met Ven. Kovida while renewing his visa in Colombo. He may have sensed a kindred spirit. Ven. Kovida requested to come to Laggala and Nyāṇadīpa Bhante agreed. With the help of Ven. Sankiccha, Ven. Kovida arrived in 1986.

Unfortunately, Ven. Kovida had weak lungs. In 1987, he contracted a fever while staying at the Iryagasulpota kuṭi. The fever progressively got worse. Originally, Ven. Kovida had thought it was malaria. His ascetic bent was such that he endured the fever for a long time. Eventually, the lay

supporters at Iryagasulpota became frightened by his deteriorating condition. Therefore, they put him on a bicycle and wheeled him to the hospital. Unfortunately, he died the following day. It turned out that he had pneumonia.

Ven. Kovida's dedication to Buddhism had impressed many. About a year after his death, a small book about his life called 'Majestic Tree of Merit' was published in his honour.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante went to Ven. Kovida's funeral. It was held at Ven. Sankiccha's monastery nearby. At the funeral, he met a French monk from Nissarana Vanaya. The French monk was interested in seeing the kuṭi where Ven. Kovida had stayed.

Bhante took him to see the Iryagasulpota kuṭi. Here, the French monk met the dāyaka²⁹ who took care of the monks staying in the kuṭi. He said to the dāyaka, "I want to stay here next vassa. Don't let any other monks stay here."

This annoyed Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. The Iryagasulpota kuṭi was the first kuṭi constructed at Laggala and it was constructed for him. After considering the matter further, Bhante decided to relinquish his attachment to the kuṭi. This was another impressive example of Bhante's dedication to the principles of the Dhamma.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante offered the French monk a choice of three kuṭis: the Iryagasulpota kuṭi and two others in the Madumana forest. The French monk ended up choosing to stay in the Madumana forest for the 1988 vassa.

However, soon after vassa ended, the French monk returned to Nissarana Vanaya. Here, he met Guttasīla Bhante. When Guttasīla Bhante asked him how it went, he replied: "Mahā dukkha³⁰". Laggala was a very remote area. As a result, the almsfood and lodgings could sometimes be quite basic.

The next monk to come was a Sinhalese monk named Ven. Sanghasubhadra. He stayed for three months into early 1989. Following this, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was alone again at Laggala.

In 1990, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante walked from Laggala to Colombo to extend his six-year visa. While he was in Colombo, he stopped by Nissarana Vanaya and invited his old friend, Guttasīla Bhante, to come to Laggala. It was an auspicious invitation.

In 1990, Guttasīla Bhante came to spend the vassa at Laggala. His arrival signalled the start of a stable community. Venerable Sankiccha stayed elsewhere for the 1990 vassa but he would soon return. Together, Bhante Sankiccha, Bhante Nyāṇadīpa, and Bhante Guttasīla gave Laggala a communal foundation. The mid-90s would also see the arrival of Venerable Bodhipālo and Venerable Visarādo. They were both western monks who had ordained in the Chah Tradition in Thailand. Two junior Sinhalese monks joined the community as well.

Laggala was starting to grow, and with it, a culture of solitary kuṭi dwelling. For Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, however, the early '90s would bring another sort of change. This would give rise to one of the most widely misreported legends about him. Soon, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante would become a stateless person.

Stateless Person

A newspaper carried a story about Nyāṇadīpa Bhante shortly before his death. In the story, the reporter discussed what he'd heard from a village boy in the Laggala area. The boy said that when Nyāṇadīpa Bhante arrived in Sri Lanka, he knew his passport would be an attachment. Therefore, he threw it away. Another story that circulated in the monastic community was that Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had burned his passport. The rumour was that afterwards, the authorities allowed him to stay in Sri Lanka. The truth was far more prosaic.

By the early 1990s, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was becoming fed up with having to go to Colombo to renew his visa. He had a special arrangement and so his visa only needed renewal every six years. However, his love of the forest was so great, that even this was proving too much.

The first avenue Bhante tried to remedy the problem was to become a Sri Lankan citizen. Generally, foreigners were not allowed to become citizens of Sri Lanka. However, the president at the time had the power to grant six citizenships per year.

Mr. Dudley Fernando, who had built Bhante a kuṭi at Bulathsinghala, had a connection that seemed as though it would help. His relative was a special advisor to President Premadasa. Through this connection, Bhante was able to request Sri Lankan citizenship. Unfortunately, he was refused. President Premadasa felt that if he were to give citizenship to Bhante, he would be obliged to give it to missionaries as well.

Bhante was not one to give up easily. A monastic friend of his had formerly been married to a Sri Lankan lady. Eventually, they both decided to give up the married life, and ordain. As it turned out, the former brother-in-law of Bhante's monastic friend was the head of the Excise Department and happened to be close friends with the head of the Immigration Department. So, the brother-in-law approached his friend in Immigration and asked him what to do.

At Immigration, they were able to come up with a plan: Bhante would become a stateless 'citizen'. They would then have a special file for him at Immigration, which would allow him to stay in Sri Lanka without a visa. For the plan to work, however, Bhante would have to go to the French embassy and legally renounce his passport.

One can imagine that such a move would be daunting. There would, of course, have been the possibility that it could fail. This could have left Bhante without a country to represent him, and

potentially without a country to stay in. However, in a characteristic display of courage and determination, Bhante went to the French embassy. There, he legally renounced his passport.

Thankfully, the plan worked well. Bhante remained in Sri Lanka, not only homeless but also stateless. It was a condition that would last until close to the end of his life.

Bhante was now free to stay in the Laggala forest without interruption. By the early nineties, the authorities permitted him to stay inside Wasgamuwa National Park. In 1993, Bhante's stay in the national park gave rise to another legendary story. Unfortunately, this one would not have as happy of an ending.

The Wasgamuwa Incident

The herd of deer looked surprised to see Bhante. This was unusual, as he'd walked by them many times before. Normally they paid him no mind and they certainly didn't act surprised. He would later describe it as a type of foreboding³¹.

Bhante was staying inside Wasgamuwa National Park. The authorities had great respect for him. Bhante had done so much exploring that he may have known the park better than anyone else. On one occasion, when the park authorities wanted to construct roads, they consulted Bhante. They also asked for Bhante's help to find a stupa that had been destroyed by treasure hunters.

Wasgamuwa National Park spans more than 39,000 hectares. The Mahaveli River forms its eastern border. The Amban River forms its northern border. An electric fence had recently been constructed in some places. This kept the elephants from leaving. Unfortunately, they became angry at its construction. In retaliation, they smashed several of the Wildlife Department's jeeps. Bhante would duck under the electric fence to go to the village for piṇḍapāta.

On this day, after heading out from his dwelling, he passed by a herd of elephants. He often walked past herds of about 20 elephants. During his stay at Wilpattu and also at Laggala, Bhante had become used to elephants. So, he didn't think anything about passing a large group. On this day, however, a female elephant broke away from the others. She ran partway up to Bhante but then turned around and returned to the group³².

Bhante continued on his way. He went to the village for piṇḍapāta and then started back to his dwelling. On the way, he met the herd of deer, who were unusually spooked. Not long afterwards, he was passing by a bush, when he heard some rustling. Inside, he could hear an elephant making a sound with its mouth: "Haa!" Bhante related that typically, elephants will make sounds with their trunks. When they're irritated, however, they make sounds with their mouth.

Bhante continued to walk but the elephant caught his scent. It was a male elephant and it ran out of the bushes, heading straight for him. Bhante was walking on the elephant path. He recited a special gāthā to calm the elephant, but it didn't stop.

The elephant ran towards Bhante and reared up on its hind legs. It used its two front legs to strike towards Bhante's head. Bhante raised his arms to protect his face. The elephant struck Bhante with its foot. Its nail cut his forearms and forehead. The force of the blow knocked him backwards. He fell down with his legs apart.

After striking Bhante, one of the elephant's feet landed between his legs. It crushed the fleshy part of the thigh but thankfully missed the bone. However, the pressure was so great, that it broke the head of his thigh bone. The elephant's foot also badly damaged his penis, ripping off much of its skin. After it had injured Bhante, the elephant turned around and quickly left.

Bhante felt that the elephant didn't want to kill him. If it had, it could have stepped on his chest. Sometimes, as well, elephants will kneel down and crush people with their heads. In this case, however, the elephant quickly left.

Bhante knew that it would be another 24 hours before the villagers realized he was missing. Perhaps two kilometres away was a jeep track. Bhante was badly injured. He realized he would have to push himself there.

Before attempting to move to the jeep track, Bhante tried to drink some of the milk he'd received on piṇḍapāta. Wasgamuwa is extremely hot. Therefore, he was in danger of dehydration. Unfortunately, Bhante's system was badly damaged. His body may have also been in a state of shock. He was unable to digest the milk and he vomited it up. He tried to eat some fruit as well but it was also difficult to keep down. He became worried, as it was still morning. The full heat of the day was yet to come.

Since he was unable to eat, Bhante decided to make his way in the direction of the jeep track. He left his things behind and began to push himself back-first. Unfortunately, Bhante's penis had been damaged and he was bleeding a lot. As he went, he left a trail of blood. Ants followed the trail and began to bite him. It was very painful.

Bhante continued along but often had to take breaks. Eventually, he reached an area where there were no ants. In this 'antless' area, he thought that he would try to sleep. Unfortunately, the pain was so intense that he was unable.

Partway through the night, an elephant approached Bhante and stopped just a few meters away. He thought it was likely the same elephant that had injured him. He had heard from the villagers that when an elephant injures a human, they often come back later to see if they've killed it.

The following day, the villagers found Bhante. They also knew the forest very well. They made a stretcher out of a sarong (lower garment). Then, they took Bhante to the Wildlife Department office. From there, he was taken by jeep to the Kandy hospital. Later, he would remark “That was almost worse!”

Unfortunately, Bhante’s leg bone was improperly set at the hospital. Therefore, until the end of his life, one leg would appear significantly shorter than the other. However, this would not deter Bhante from living in the forest. Soon, he would return again.

A Softening of Character

“You’re late, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante said to Guttasīla Bhante. He was waiting at a meeting place in the Laggala forest. Guttasīla Bhante had just arrived. It was 1995 and Nyāṇadīpa Bhante and Guttasīla Bhante had a shared piṇḍapāta route. They were both living in isolated kuṭis at Laggala. Piṇḍapāta was scheduled; different households would offer alms, according to the day. The schedule was such that every week or two, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante and Guttasīla Bhante would go piṇḍapāta together to the same isolated village. Guttasīla Bhante had arrived after Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, which had prompted the rebuke.

The next time, Guttasīla Bhante made sure to be there before Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. This time, however, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante said, ‘You’re early.’ The inconsistency upset Guttasīla Bhante. He wrote a letter to Nyāṇadīpa Bhante saying: “If I come after you, I’m late. If I come before you, I’m early. What about you? There’s two monks for piṇḍapāta. If I come after you, can’t I say you’re early? If I come before you, can’t I say you’re late?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had returned to Laggala two years earlier. In 1993, after the accident, he spent vassa in Nissarana Vanaya recuperating. After vassa, he walked from Nissarana Vanaya to Kandy using back roads. He could only walk five miles a day because the pain was severe³³. Bhante was 49 years old. His cārikā would have been perhaps three to four months after the accident.

From Kandy, Bhante received a lift up to Corbett’s gate. This was as far as one could go into Laggala by normal car. From Corbett’s gate, Bhante walked the rest of the distance into Laggala.

Bhante continued to stay at various kuṭis in Laggala. In 1995, Guttasīla Bhante was preparing to leave for Burma. Before he left, he and Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had the shared piṇḍapāta route. When Nyāṇadīpa Bhante received Guttasīla Bhante’s letter, it disturbed him somewhat. He had a genuine wish for truth, and he could see there was truth in what Guttasīla Bhante was saying. Just because Guttasīla Bhante came before him, that may not mean that Guttasīla Bhante was early. Just because Guttasīla Bhante came after him, that may not mean that Guttasīla Bhante

was late. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante requested a meeting with Guttasīla Bhante and they discussed the matter.

Little-by-little, over the years in Laggala, Guttasīla Bhante noticed a softening of Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's character. Early on, there was a certain coarseness to Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. He was thinking of himself — in particular, his wish for solitude. He was not very skilled at communicating with others. Over the years, a more considerate attitude began to emerge. This seems to have been the result of his engagement with the Sangha.

An incident from his early monastic life may have also contributed to the change in Bhante's character. On one occasion, Bhante spent vassa at Kalugala Aranya. While he was there, he received a letter from Sāmaṇera Samita. Sāmaṇera Samita was from New York, and he was staying at the Būndala Kuṭi. He wrote to Bhante asking him to come because he was thinking of committing suicide.

Bhante took a seven day leave³⁴ and went to the Būndala Kuṭi. At the Būndala Kuṭi he discussed the matter with Sāmaṇera Samita. It seemed that Sāmaṇera Samita had a problem with lust. He also had a 'do or die' attitude. Since he was finding lust unmanageable, he was considering suicide. He felt that it would be preferable to disrobing. In this line of thinking, he seems to have been influenced by Ven. Nyāṇavīra.

The discussion seemed successful. It appeared that Bhante was able to help allay Sāmaṇera Samita's suicidal thoughts. Bhante returned to Kalugala to finish the vassa.

Perhaps sometime after vassa, Bhante returned to the Būndala Kuṭi. Sāmaṇera Samita was still there; this upset Bhante. Bhante said, "One of us has to leave in three days." There is a rule in the monastic code that a monk can only spend three consecutive nights sleeping in the same dwelling with an unordained man. Since Samita was a novice (sāmaṇera), he would be considered unordained for the purposes of the rule.

It seems that thoughts of suicide had re-arisen in Sāmaṇera Samita. He showed Nyāṇadīpa Bhante some sleeping pills that a lay supporter had given him. On the third day, Sāmaṇera Samita was still at the kuṭi. Bhante became annoyed, and said: "If I wanted to commit suicide, then I would go to Yala (a national park) because no one would find the body."

Eventually, Samita left. Perhaps a couple of weeks later, the police approached Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. A body had been found off the track on a road leading to Yala National Park. They needed Nyāṇadīpa Bhante to identify the body. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante went to take a look and confirmed that it was Samita. Bhante imagined that he had taken an overdose of sleeping pills.

Bhante felt some doubts, and — one can imagine — remorse, as well. If a bhikkhu suggests to a person that they should commit suicide and the person follows that suggestion, then the bhikkhu loses his status as monk³⁵. He cannot re-ordain for the rest of that lifetime. Since

Bhante had suggested the place to commit suicide, some concern arose that he had broken this rule. However, after discussing the matter with his fellow monks, Bhante was able to allay his doubt. He had made the statement out of anger. He didn't intend Sāmaṇera Samita to commit suicide.

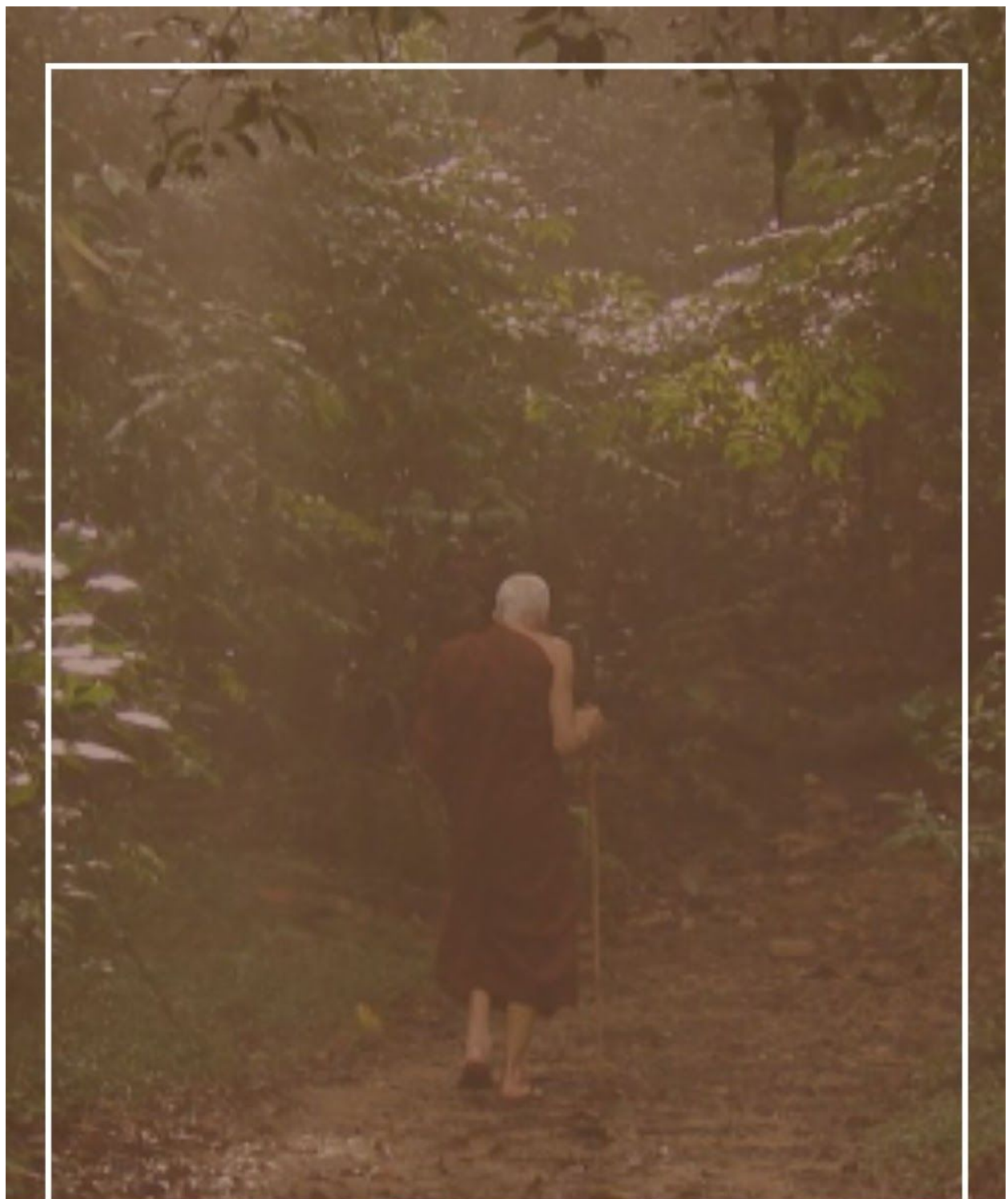
He would later reflect that Sāmaṇera Samita had many fine qualities. For example, when monks were sick in the hospital, he would go visit them. This seems to be an episode in Bhante's life that caused regret to arise but which he was later able to overcome.

In 1995, Guttasīla Bhante left Laggala to spend time in Myanmar. By 1998, he had returned to Sri Lanka. In February 1998, a special meeting was held at Laggala, which marked the end of an era. After fifteen years, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was planning to leave Laggala for the Dambulla forest.

From 1983 to 1998, Bhante had mostly stayed in the Laggala forest. Here, he had led the development of a unique mode of monastic living. It was a mode of living focused on solitary wilderness dwelling. During the middle period of his life, news of his inspiring lifestyle and accomplishments had spread. This, together with the culture he founded at Laggala, combined to make an impact on the Sri Lankan forest tradition.

This impact continues to this day. When Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was living at the Būndala Kuṭi, solitary forest monks were considered unusual. By the time of his death, solitary forest dwelling had become one of the features of the Sri Lankan forest tradition. Even today, many monks are meditating in solitary kuṭis in the forests of Sri Lanka. This may have a direct or indirect connection to Bhante and the culture he founded at Laggala.

There is a dynamic tension in a monk's life between solitude and community. While the Buddha highly recommended solitude, he also established a community called the Sangha. This community is charged with caring for its members and for helping to train them towards the goal of arahantship. In the later phase of his life, the balance of this tension would draw Bhante into greater contact with other monks. This would allow his knowledge and example to spread more widely. It would also allow for the Sangha to support him in his last days.



Paṭipatti | Practice



Paṭipatti | Practice

Monastic Lifestyle

Living Alone

☸ Nyāṇadīpa Bhante spent most of his monastic life dwelling in solitude. Soon after becoming a sāmaṇera, Venerable Nyāṇasumana invited him to the Būndala Kuṭi. After Ven. Nyāṇasumana passed away, he continued to live at the kuṭi alone. He went back to Polgasduwa for his upasampada, but soon returned to the solitude of the Būndala Kuṭi. Bhante remarked that he'd been dwelling in solitude "since the very beginning."

☸ When asked if he had any tips for living alone, Bhante replied, "Well, I inherited the entire Sutta Pitaka at the Būndala Kuṭi. If I didn't have the Sutta Pitaka and the Pāli dictionary, I don't think I could have done it... I also lived alone from the time I was very young."

☸ Remembering his time at the Būndala Kuṭi, Bhante said, "At first, I used to like it if someone came by every once in a while for a good conversation, but later, I started to see it as a burden."

☸ "When living alone, boredom is one of the main things to overcome — being alone with nothing to do."

☸ "The greatest danger in living alone is losing delight in the Dhamma."

☸ Bhante related that when living at the Būndala Kuṭi, "If there was any problem with the mind, I would go for a walk in the forest down to the water."

☸ "When one goes to stay [alone] in the forest, fear of external danger is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is the kilesas that come up in one's mind. When you live in an aranya, you can go and talk to somebody but when you're living alone, you can't. So, that's the real test, and it's good to test oneself out in that way. But, if one finds that one can't do it, then an aranya might be more suitable. It might be more suitable not to live on one's own."

☸ "Living alone isn't a one-way street. You can always go back if you want to."

☸ During one Dhamma discussion, after discussing living alone, Bhante suddenly leaned forward in his chair. Looking intently, he said: "One thing that I do want to emphasize, is that if one goes into solitude, then one shouldn't take a computer or smartphone because then, you're

not really alone. One needs to be alone with one's body and mind. I never had a computer or a smartphone. They weren't around in those days and I never found that I needed one."

☸ Towards the end of his life, Bhante remarked: "Now that I've been living alone for so long, I can't imagine a life without solitude."

Staying in the Wilderness

☸ When Bhante wandered on cārikā, sometimes villagers would offer to build him a kuṭi. He said that "I would usually stay in the forest (after wandering on cārikā). While staying there, I would scout out a good location to build the kuṭi. I might not always build it in the same place that they might think best."

☸ *Guttasīla Bhante*: "Bhante would have a kuṭi built where there's a good permanent water supply... there had to be good forest, there would be non-disturbance from any noise, from maybe aeroplanes. It would also be comfortable to stay there, that there would not be too many mosquitoes or biting creatures — all these things. He'd try a place. First of all, he might even stay there without any shelter. 'Cause the dry season, when it doesn't rain. So then, he might have... a temporary kuṭi built. But then, if the place was actually suitable, well then he'd have a more permanent kuṭi built. By permanent, I mean to say livable."

☸ *Guttasīla Bhante*: "You had to get support from piṇḍapāt. So, he'd be going, maybe walking in the forest and staying some days until he found a suitable place, then going piṇḍapāta to the neighbouring village. All these villages are in the forest, connected with the forest. Not like modern times. And, the villagers, they had wonderful faith.... So, you get all these kind of connections but then people had so much good faith that when they meet Bhante, they're very impressed. So, then they want to build the kuṭi, provide support — it's just his charisma and the way that he leads the monk's life. So, you know, the men get so impressed to help... the village people to give dāna."

☸ Bhante would usually stay at a kuṭi for about a year, and then move on. In this way, many solitary kuṭis were built in Sri Lanka. Through his example, Bhante helped to build a culture of solitary forest meditation. This is now a culture for which Sri Lanka is becoming known. Bhante always had mud kuṭis built. Bhante remarked, "An aranya tradition already existed in Sri Lanka, but I am the founder of the mud kuṭi tradition."

☸ Sometimes Bhante would meditate in one place during the day and sleep in another place at night. He related that "The place where it is most comfortable to sleep isn't always the place where it is most comfortable to meditate."

☸ One monk asked Bhante about staying in caves. He said that some of the caves he'd come across had a very strong mildew smell. He wondered if Bhante had any advice for staying

in such places. Bhante replied, “If it was bats, then one can burn the cave and all of it (mainly bat feces) will burn up. It burns very slowly, but then afterwards, it’s fine.”

For mildew smells, he said: “You can open the windows.”

☸ The same monk asked him if burning incense could help with smells. Bhante replied: “Burning incense indoors is dangerous. It may be chemical incense, in which case, it can be dangerous to burn indoors. Better to burn it outside.”

☸ “If caves are moist, then one has to be careful because there might be scorpions or small snakes living in the cave.”

☸ When asked if he’d ever been caught in the rain, Bhante replied, “Of course. Once, I was walking in the forest and there were many leeches. It started to rain and I went and sat on a rock in the middle of the stream (to avoid the leeches) and accepted that I would get wet.”

☸ If all of one’s robes were to get wet in the rain, Bhante advised: “You can try to wring them out as much as possible. If there’s no sun and it’s humid, then the only option is to put them on and let the heat of the body dry them.”

Dealing With Wild Animals

☸ During a Dhamma discussion, one of the monks asked whether it would be beneficial to stay in a place with a lot of wild animals. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante said: “It may or may not be beneficial. Once, I was staying in a place where I had to cross an elephant path on the way to piṇḍapāṭa. I used to think to myself, ‘This could be my last piṇḍapāṭa.’ That was helpful for arousing a sense of urgency.

“However, if it’s too infested with elephants, it can be a problem. When I was living in the Būndala³⁶ forest, the elephants were very peaceful and I got used to going past them, but then, I had that experience with the elephant near Laggala. So, one can’t be overconfident but one also can’t be over-fearful. One has to find a middle way between.”

☸ A monk asked a question about the protective power of parittas. Regarding elephants, Bhante said: “I would use the paritta:

*‘Etam nāgassa nāgena
īśānantassa hatthino
sameti cittaṃ cittena
yad’eko ramatī vane³⁷.’*

(English: This nāga agrees with nāga

The elephant with tusks like carriage poles
Mind with mind
Each delights in the forest alone)

“... This paritta comes from the time the Buddha went to stay in the Parileyya wilderness. An elephant had come there as well. It describes two nāgas — two great beings — delighting together in the forest. The Buddha commented that the mind of the two nāgas was the same. But, it (the paritta) doesn't always work. It didn't work for me that time in Laggala. Well, maybe I wasn't doing it correctly. People can say all sorts of things.”

☸ “A nāga can mean any kind of great being. Elephants and some cobras can be considered nāgas. The arahant is the foremost type of nāga. When one recites the paritta, the most important thing is to have a friendly attitude. Then, sometimes, the elephant will feel that and leave one alone.”

☸ “Nyāṇavimala Bhante had that experience where he was staying at Kudumbigala, and the bear approached him with its claws extended. He chanted the Khandha Paritta, then the bear retracted its claws and left. I haven't had experiences like that.

“The most important thing when chanting parittas is the frame of mind. One should have a mind of mettā. One can use any words one wants, but the frame of mind is most important.”

☸ When asked about snakes, Bhante replied: “For the most part, they're not dangerous. I was bitten three times. The first two times, there was a little swelling. Often snakes will not release all of their venom. Juveniles can sometimes be more dangerous because they don't know how to control their venom.

“The third time, I was taking a bath. I was soaping up and saw a snake coiled on the bank. There is a type of snake that's capable of jumping. It jumped and bit me on the thigh. I think it was angry because I was soaping up its hunting ground. It thought I might get rid of all the frogs.

“That time, my leg swelled a lot. I would fast every Saturday and the following day was my fast day. So, I wouldn't see the villagers until the day after. When I went for piṇḍapāta, a boy noticed my leg. They were quite concerned but I wasn't worried. I knew I would not die³⁸.”

☸ “Snakes are not dangerous³⁹. I've encountered so many snakes...”

☸ “There's a type of snake that can climb the walls of a mud kuṭi. It has a way of twisting its body and climbing up. These kuṭis (referring to a concrete kuṭi) they can't climb. They climb the walls, and live in the rafters.

“Sometimes, I would be sitting in the kuṭi, and hear a sound like (smacks his hand against something nearby). A snake had fallen from the roof... One can get a broom and flick it outside.

One need not worry about harming the snake. They have a way of twisting their body to soften the fall.”

☸ A Canadian monk told Nyāṇadīpa Bhante about a close encounter with a cobra. He said he’d yelled loudly, and chanted the khandha paritta in a frightened voice. Bhante replied: “The main thing is to stay calm, and radiate feelings of calm towards it.”

☸ Regarding crocodiles, Bhante said: “They don’t eat monks, so don’t worry... If one is bitten, it will want to drag you down into the water. In that case, one can grab both its nostrils⁴⁰ to cut off the air flow. When it opens its mouth to breathe, then one can get away.”

☸ “One needn’t worry so much about snakes. Elephants, on the other hand, one should be careful of.”

☸ Once, when a monk was giving Bhante a massage, he started to chuckle softly. When the monk asked why he was laughing, Bhante replied: “I was remembering a time I was going along (in the forest), and the elephants had gone ahead and broken the branches (along the way).”

☸ A few monks were planning to head on a trip into the wilderness outside of Tanjantenna. One monk asked Bhante what they should do if they encountered an elephant. Bhante replied: “You can make your way away from it. It’s best to go upslope. It’s hard for them to go up slopes. It’s easy for them to go down steep slopes but they aren’t so good at climbing. So, if you can go up a slope, that will slow them down.”

☸ “Sometimes the gāthā (nāgassa nāgena...) doesn’t work. Once, I recited the gāthā to an elephant, and he began to quickly come towards me. I started to head up the slope (to the top of a hill). There was another path to the top of the hill and the elephant ran up that path to meet me. I continued along the side of the hill and then returned to the (original) path. When the elephant reached the top, it saw me (back on the original path) and quickly turned around. I jumped into a stream bed, and started to follow it down. The elephant did not follow me after that. He didn’t like my gāthā.”

☸ “Once, I was walking in the forest, and I saw an elephant with a baby on the path ahead. So, I took a side path down into a stream. It knew I was going to the stream and by the time I got there, it was already waiting for me. When I emerged from the bushes, the elephant was just twelve feet in front of me.

“It charged me, and in that case, I didn’t have time to react. So, I just stood with my arms to my side⁴¹. There was nothing I could do. I looked into the elephant’s eyes and the thought came up, ‘He’s bluffing.’

“The elephant crashed into the bushes to the side. Often, elephants don’t want to kill, they just want to see you run. They want to see you scared.”

☸ Once, during a massage session, a Canadian monk asked Bhante about a trail he was thinking of exploring. The trail went between two mountains and was in a flat and shady area of the forest. There were signs of frequent elephant use. He asked Bhante whether trails like this were safe to explore on one’s own or whether one should go with a group. Bhante replied: “In my case, I explored on my own... Don’t worry; you can explore it on your own.”

The monk continued asking questions about other wild animals. Eventually, Bhante said: “Why are you so concerned with safety?... Don’t be so concerned with safety.”

☸ Regarding fear: “It’s important to have mettā for the various beings in the forest⁴². One learns to recognize the fear coming up, but not be afraid of the fear itself.”

How to Go On Cārikā

☸ One monk asked Bhante how to go on cārikā. He replied: “As one is going along, one can ask the villagers if there are any caves nearby. If there are, then one can go there. If there are no caves, then one can move on. Eventually, they will tend to build a kuṭi.”

☸ “You can go into any forest in Sri Lanka... Don’t worry; just go there.”

☸ “Here (in Sri Lanka), we don’t use the mosquito net and umbrella that they do in Thailand. They’re too heavy. You just sleep at the root of the tree...

“Sometimes, I would be heading back to my kuṭi, but wouldn’t make it before dark. So, I would have to find a tree. The tree should be on level ground. You can sleep there.”

☸ *Monk*: “When travelling in the forest, how does one avoid losing track of directions?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “I used a compass. I also had local maps, 1 to 50,000 (scale) that were quite detailed. I would use those to find places to stay.”

☸ “There are different kinds of maps. There’s one map that’s 1:50,000. The map that’s 1 to 50,000 is newer but it still shows some of the footpaths used in ancient times.”

☸ When asked how to find the entrance to the ancient footpaths, Bhante replied: “You have to find the (older) maps that are one inch to a mile⁴³. In the old days, the survey department used to walk everywhere. In more recent times, they’ve become lazy. They just use satellite maps.”

☸ Regarding finding campsites, Bhante said: “When crossing over to a new area, you should try to scout the area out beforehand. Sometimes rocks can be hard, so one wants to find sandy ground. If there’s a lot of undergrowth in the forest, it can be difficult to stay there.”

☸ When camping: “One wants to find an area where the trees are spaced apart. Then, one can choose a tree and stay there. But, one should make sure that there are not too many ants there because if there are many, it could be a problem.”

☸ “Try to avoid sleeping on an elephant trail.”

☸ When camping: “Water is very important. One wants to choose a place that’s near water.”

☸ A monk asked Bhante how to find springs in the forest. Bhante replied: “I spent so much time walking in the forest, that I became used to finding springs. Sometimes villagers would tell me, but for the most part, I would find them on my own.”

☸ “I didn’t need a filter because I would normally find springs, but I never had problems with kidney stones and other things that some people report having.”

☸ “When one goes to stay in a forest area, people may be suspicious. So, what one can do is to make sure that one is always practicing because they might spy on you. That happened to me. People came to spy on me. Because of this injury, they saw the way I was sitting in meditation⁴⁴ and they said ‘That’s not meditation’. So, one wants to make sure that one is always practicing, because otherwise, people may become suspicious.”

☸ When asked if he’d spent much time discussing the Dhamma with the renowned cārikā monk, Nyāṇavimala Bhante, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante replied: “Bhante Nyāṇavimala wasn’t a forest monk. He had much higher powers of mindfulness than I did and he had this dhutanga of being content with any dwelling. So, he would go into a pansala, lock the door...

“The pansalas were different then. There was no TV at the time and so it was easier to live there without distraction.”

Places to Go On Cārikā

☸ “There’s a good cārikā from here (Bhaddeka Vihari Aranya) to Belihuloya.”

☸ “In this area (Tanjantenna), there are some very nice walks, very nice views... Sometimes, when walking one will find piles of stones, which may be 100 years old. That was how they used to do surveying. They would measure the angles from the tops of mountains. They would see a mountain peak over there (gesturing) and measure the angle from here.”

☸ One monk asked Bhante about a trail running from an ancient cave kuṭi called the Dehipitiya Kuṭi to the area around Bhaddeka Vihari. He was thinking to start exploring from Bhaddeka Vihari and to try to find his way to the kuṭi. Bhante replied: “Best would be to go and stay at the Dehipitiya Kuṭi. Then, you can explore from there.”

☸ As Bhante’s illness worsened, he moved from a forest kuṭi at Tanjantenna to the central monastic area. In the central monastic area, he stayed in a large kuṭi called the ‘Mahāthera Kuṭi’. One monk who had been helping to attend to Bhante went to see him. He sat down, and Bhante began to speak. He was in a reminiscent mood. After discussing other topics for a while, he began to talk about his past. He remembered his time in the Singharājā forest. He also remembered a more recent adventure. Leaning forward in his chair, he said: “Don’t tell anyone,⁴⁵ but I re-discovered an ancient riding path going from Kandy to Badulla. It was used by the British in colonial times...

“I had copies of old maps, that was how I found out about the path. On the old maps, the path was very accurate, but the elevations were not very accurate. On the newer maps, the elevations were accurate, but the path wasn’t. So, I had to use two sets of maps. It was very complicated.... It took about three days to walk. It was overgrown in some places but I could go down (the hill to skirt the overgrowth) and then reconnect with the path.”

When asked how he was able to go on piṇḍapāta, Bhante replied: “The path connected to railway stations.”

General Advice

☸ An upāsika asked Bhante how long one should sleep each day. The upāsika said that in the suttas, it seemed to recommend four hours of sleep per night. Bhante replied, “Anywhere between three and five hours sleep is a good amount but one shouldn’t try to force it. Six hours would be too much. But, if one is at the beginning of one’s practice, one shouldn’t worry too much if one is sleeping six hours. However, one shouldn’t be pleased with that.

“The amount of sleep needed can vary from person to person. One shouldn’t be dull; one shouldn’t be dreary in one’s meditation. Also, I take a nap in the middle of the day for one hour.”

☸ Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was among the most reclusive monks of his time. He had contact with his family, but it was quite limited. In the early ‘80s, his mother came to visit him. However, after the visit, he did not allow her to contact him again. His brother also visited three times. The most recent time was two or three years before he passed away.

☸ One monk from the Thai tradition came to visit Bhante after he had moved to the Mahāthera Kuṭi. He asked Bhante about the importance of humour in the practice. Bhante replied: “Being able to laugh at oneself is important. Making jokes for fun is not important.”

☸ “When you’re looking for a place to stay, don’t look for a “normal” place⁴⁶. If you see a shed in the middle of a field, that could be a good place to stay.”

☸ During a massage session, one monk asked Bhante about a ‘crossroads’ period in a monk’s life. He said that at a certain point, a monk could go down one path, and possibly start their own monastery. They could also go down another path, and continue practicing for life. However, worries can arise: if one doesn’t have one’s own monastery, then others could take advantage of one and stop one from following the monastic rules. To this, Bhante replied: “These things don’t happen.”

Asceticism

☸ One monk asked how one could know if the ascetic practices were beneficial. Bhante replied: “You have to watch your mind. If one sees that they’re unbeneficial, then one should stop. These are external things; they’re meant to support internal development.”

☸ When asked about having a sense of pride in ascetic practices, Bhante replied: “Pride comes from asmi māna; that’s the root defilement — a sense that I’m better, I’m worse, or I’m equal. In my own case, I usually felt that I was worse.”

☸ *Sāmaṇera*: “Did you ever go barefoot⁴⁷?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “I did for a little while, but it got quite difficult.”

Sāmaṇera: “What were the disadvantages?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Well, the disadvantages are obvious.”

Chanting and Study

☸ Bhante would usually study or read in the morning time. When asked about the amount of study that one should do each day, Bhante replied: “Two to three hours should be sufficient, although it can vary depending on the individual.”

☸ Bhante had an impressive chanting practice. The amount of chanting that he did varied over the course of his life. In earlier periods, it seems that he would chant three times a day. He eventually reduced this to two times a day and then to once a day. Towards the end of his life, he related that he chanted 50 minutes every day.

Bhante's chanting practice tended to focus on the memorization of short, pithy verses. One night, after moving into Mahāthera Kuṇi, in the central area of Bhaddeka Vihari, Bhante described his chanting practice to one of the monks who came to visit him. He said: "I started to memorize gāthās in the Singharājā forest. I had one gāthā for every day of the week. So, Monday was the Muni gāthā. I used these names so much that I eventually started to forget the real weekday names.

"Initially, I reached 1000 gāthās. At Laggala, though, it reached a peak of more than 3000 gāthās⁴⁸. I was especially interested in the gāthās about Nibbāna. I would spend time reciting every day...

"Now that I've gotten older, there are many slips when chanting but previously, there were very few."

☸ Bhante compiled notebooks with the gāthās and suttas that he wanted to keep in mind. Over the years, he'd gone through several notebooks. The one that he used later in life took a few years for him to compile. However, eventually, he was able to fit about 3000 gāthās as well as suttas into a notebook perhaps less than an inch thick.

The first entry in the notebook was the Mahā Nidāna sutta, in the Dīgha Nikāya. There were also many gāthās drawn from the Sutta Nipāta, Dhammapāda and the Theragāthā.

☸ During a Dhamma discussion, one monk speculated that in the Buddha's day, some monks might memorize only a few suttas. He reasoned monks wouldn't have had access to all the books we do in the modern day. Therefore, it would be likely that they would only memorize a few suttas that they'd heard from their teachers. Then, they would go to practice, using those teachings as an inspiration. Bhante replied, "It might be the case. They also had much better memories then."

Meditation

☸ Bhante didn't have a teacher. Therefore, one monk was curious as to how he learned to meditate. Bhante replied: "From the suttas and also through discussion with other monks."

☸ In discussing his early monastic life, Bhante said: "Not many people in Sri Lanka were meditating at the time. There was a pūja tradition. People would do mal (flower) pūjas. The aranyas had been established but the monks were not meditating there."

☸ "Meditation was always there (in Sri Lanka), it was just a small minority."

☸ When asked about meditation topics, Bhante said: "That's pretty individual."

❁ Despite his impressive accomplishments, Bhante had a very humble attitude. Once, when asked about meditation, he said: “I am not the model bhikkhu to ask. I’ve just been going for walks in the forest⁴⁹. Only rarely would I practice meditation intensely, perhaps for three days at time.”

Teachers

❁ “I am one of the monks who’s proved that one doesn’t need a teacher. It’s possible to get by on one’s own, reading the suttas.”

❁ *Monk*: ‘How do you tell if you’re on the wrong path if you don’t have a teacher?’

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It’s very difficult. If one can find an arahant, then one can trust them completely. I’ve rarely heard rumours of that, except in Thailand. There were fewer rumours then (in his younger days), now there’s more...”

“Sometimes, one may also find someone on the path who is struggling with the same problem, but that would be rare.”

❁ “In my own case, I didn’t have a teacher, but I learned the suttas very thoroughly as a backup.”

Hindrances

❁ About two months before his death, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante moved from Bhaddeka Vihari to Etdalagala monastery. Once, a small group of monks from Bhaddeka Vihari went to visit Bhante. When they arrived at Etdalagala, they discovered that he was in the hospital. They headed to a hospital and saw Bhante laying on a bed. He had mostly stopped speaking by that time. However, when one monk asked him a question about the Dhamma, he immediately answered. The monk asked, “There are many suttas, which discuss countering the various hindrances. For lust, one has āsubha; for hatred, one has mettā. I haven’t been able to find what can be used to counter uddhacca-kukkucca (restlessness and anxiety).”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Ānāpānasati... It appears in the Udāna, and also other places in the canon.⁵⁰”

❁ *Monk*: “If one is not aggressive, but other people act in aggressive ways towards one, what should one do?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It’s never happened to me. What one should do is very clear — follow the Buddha’s teachings and not reciprocate.”

Samatha

Jhānas (General)

Regarding the iddhipādas, Bhante said that he would translate (a portion of) the first one as: you ‘get samādhi’ or ‘gain samādhi through desire.’

Towards the end of his stay at Bhaddeka Vihari, Guttasīla Bhante and also other monks from Laggala came to visit Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. Guttasīla Bhante had arranged to have a Dhamma discussion with Nyāṇadīpa Bhante at around 2pm. News spread fast and as it turned out, more than ten monks came to hear and participate in the discussion. Towards the end of the discussion, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante noticed that one monk didn’t ask any questions. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante said: “(Monk’s name) You don’t have any questions?”

Monk: “...I’m not much of a thinker, Bhante. I want to achieve all the jhānas up and down, or die trying.”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Then you’ll succeed.”

“If one is on the path and is developing samādhi, it must be coupled with right view. Otherwise, one can become a Christian, one can become a Hindu, one can become a Mahāyānist developing samādhi. If samādhi is developed along with right view, then it’s safe.”

An upāsaka asked Bhante about the sutta ‘Delight in Company’ in the Anguttara Nikāya⁵¹. This sutta says that it’s impossible for somebody to have right view without seeing the sign of the mind. He asked if this was referring to the nimitta sign that one sees before entering a jhāna. Bhante replied: “No, that’s not what it means. It’s referring to the simile of the cook⁵². The cook watches his master to see what food he takes. One watches the mind to see what gives rise to wholesome qualities.”

There is sometimes debate as to what constitutes a jhāna. One monk teaches a method whereby one becomes absorbed into a light. After being absorbed into the light, one becomes immobilized in a state of bliss. A monk asked about this teacher’s method. Bhante replied: “No doubt (he)⁵³ is speaking from experience but one shouldn’t think that’s the only way.”

If he felt it was appropriate for his listeners, sometimes Bhante would describe the methods of other teachers. One upāsika was a follower of a teacher, who taught that one attains jhāna by getting absorbed into a light nimitta. When discussing jhāna practice with the upāsaka, with a smile on his face, Bhante said: “It’s when the breath becomes so beautiful that a light appears and you get absorbed into the light.”

There is some debate in the West as to whether ‘kāya’ (body) in jhāna formulas means the physical body or a mental ‘body’. An upāsaka who was a follower of a teacher whose method involves being absorbed into a light asked about this. He said that he was more on the side of the debate that one needs to develop the jhānas until the body disappears. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante replied: “Pīti in the first jhāna is bound up with the body. It’s waves of rapture spreading through the body. In the fourth jhāna, the breath stops but the body is still there.”

Monk: “How should we take the description of the jhānas in the Kāyagatāsati Sutta⁵⁴?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “I am not an expert at the jhānas. It’s rare that I would achieve them at a deep level, but I take it literally. Pīti-sukha is a feeling that arises before the jhānas. Pīti is more bodily; sukha is more mental.”

Regarding the difference between pīti, passaddhi, and samādhi: “Pīti has an energetic aspect to it. In the Aggi Sutta⁵⁵, it says that when the mind is sluggish, that is the time to cultivate pīti (rapture), viriya (energy), and dhamma-vicaya (investigation of phenomena). When the mind is restless, that is the time to cultivate passaddhi (calm), samādhi (concentration), and upekkhā (equanimity)... Passaddhi is ‘calm’; it’s a precursor to samādhi.”

“The first jhāna is more thinking-oriented. In the second jhāna, one drops pīti and focuses on sukha. In the third jhāna, there is just happiness and equanimity. Then, one lets go of even the happiness.”

“Sometimes, when I was reading the suttas, I would feel waves of rapture coming through the body.”

Bhante related that in his early years, he was attaining sāmādhi through vipassanā practice. The depth of his samādhi seemed to be increasing. He felt satisfied with his level of concentration. However, after the accident with the elephant, his ability to gain samādhi became much more limited.

Once at a Dhamma discussion, a monk asked Bhante about ānāpānasati⁵⁶ practice. It sounded like this monk was gaining sāmādhi through his ānāpānasati practice. He asked Bhante how ānāpānasati could be used for further development. Bhante replied: “The Ānāpānasati Sutta says that ānāpānasati can be used all the way to Nibbāna. Don’t just use it for calm. Practice cittānupassana as well.”

“Don’t think that samādhi alone will get you there.”

Mettā

☸ “There are two different ways to practice mettā. In one method, one learns to spread mettā in the six directions⁵⁷. In the other method, one focuses more on beings⁵⁸. In either case, one should be directing mettā towards living beings.”

☸ A monk asked Bhante about the eight liberations⁵⁹. One of the liberations is the perception of the beautiful. He wondered how the perception of the beautiful could be a liberation. Bhante replied: “The perception of the beautiful is equivalent to the third jhāna... The third jhāna is as high as one can go in experiencing sukha vedana. Past that, it's equanimity. It results in being reborn in the subhakiṇhā deva realm.”

Immaterial Attainments

☸ An upāsaka asked Bhante about an exchange in the Sutta Nipāta between Upasīva the wanderer and the Buddha⁶⁰...

Upāsaka: “Upasīva asks the Buddha if someone standing on emptiness would stay there. The Buddha replied, ‘He may stay there.’ Is emptiness here the same as Nibbāna?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “No, it's not the same as Nibbāna. Emptiness in that case means the base of nothingness. Upasīva calls it the highest saññā (perception). It's the highest saññā because that is as far as saññā can go. The base of nothingness is as far as one can use saññā for vipassanā. Past that, one cannot use it...”

“He was asking questions such as: ‘Does he have continuous health there?’, which made clear that he was still a puthujjana. Even though he had this attainment of emptiness, he was still a puthujjana.”

☸ “In the base of neither perception nor non-perception, saññā is too weak (for vipassanā practice)”.

☸ *Monk*: “Is the cessation of perception and feeling the same as Nibbāna? When a monk enters the cessation of perception and feeling, it usually goes along with the phrase, ‘seeing with wisdom, his taints are destroyed.’”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It doesn't say ‘seeing with wisdom’. It says, ‘having seen with wisdom’. Having seen with wisdom means that he sees with wisdom before, not that he sees with wisdom on emerging. This refers to an arahant liberated in both ways.”

☸ When asked if the cessation of perception and feeling was equivalent to Nibbāna, Bhante replied: “It’s not Nibbāna. It’s this perceptionless state (asaññi) that we discussed earlier.”

Vipassanā

☸ *Upāsaka*: “What degree of samādhi do we need to practice vipassanā?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “There are so many levels. One doesn’t need to wait to reach a particular level to practice vipassanā.”

☸ “Some practice samādhi first, some practice vipassanā first⁶³. You can practice vipassanā any time. Samādhi can help; it can give you calm and stability. You don’t need to have a very deep jhāna before practicing vipassanā.”

☸ When asked how one can overcome the kilesas, Bhante replied: “That varies between individuals. Basically, one wants to keep seeing that any kind of acquisition is suffering.”

Buddhānussati

☸ In discussing the recollection of the Buddha, Bhante related: “One should gain a sense of the Buddha as a man through the suttas and through his teachings, not just using the regular formula. In this way, Buddhānussati can be much more personal and deep.”

Miscellaneous

☸ Shortly before he left Bhaddeka Vihari, Bhante had a Dhamma discussion with many monks. During this discussion, one of the monks asked about Bhante’s ‘No Cassa’ article⁶¹. He asked Bhante if Nibbāna could be taken as an object of meditation. Bhante replied: “One can incline the mind towards Nibbāna. There’s so many suttas which say, ‘etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhippaṇissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nibbānan’ti’ (This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is the calming of all formations, the relinquishment of all attachment, the cessation of craving, dispassion, Nibbāna). This does not refer to taking Nibbāna as an object. It refers to inclining the mind towards Nibbāna.”

☸ In his writing, Venerable Nyāṇavīra made the pithy statement, “The self is a negative that arises.” Nyāṇadīpa Bhante used to meditate on this statement. In one Dhamma discussion, a monk asked Bhante about its meaning. Bhante explained that it means that the self arises in our world of experience, and that it’s a negative thing. Bhante concluded his remarks by saying: “There are many deep meanings in that statement⁶².”

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

☸ “All four satipaṭṭhānas are important. Kāyanupassana (contemplation of the body), vedanānupassana (contemplation of feelings) and cittānupassana (contemplation of the mind) all have to connect with dhammānupassana⁶⁴ (contemplation of mental qualities). They have to connect to the four noble truths.”

☸ “The four satipaṭṭhānas are another one of these ‘complete’ teachings. They cover everything in the universe, but approach it from a different angle than the five khandhas. Kāyanupassana is equivalent to rūpa (form). Vedanānupassana is (equivalent to) feeling. Cittānupassana is (equivalent to) consciousness and dhammānupassana is (equivalent to) saṅkhāras (mental formations). The only one that’s missing is saññā⁶⁵.”

☸ “In practicing kāyanupassana, one learns to use the 32 parts of the body.”

☸ Regarding āsubha practice: “Mentally, one takes each of the parts of the body and puts it into a pile. So, one takes the hair and puts into one pile, one takes the skin and puts into another...”

☸ “Dhammānupassana should not be practiced alone because then it just becomes philosophy. In order for it to lead to a realization, one should go through the other three satipaṭṭhānas. One should contemplate kāyanupassana, vedanānupassana, or cittānupassana in conjunction with dhammānupassana.”

☸ In describing a popular meditation technique, which focuses on body scanning and breath meditation, Bhante said: “That technique wouldn’t be complete. It only covers two of the satipaṭṭhānas and one needs to practice all four.”

Cittānupassana — Practice

☸ When asked what type of meditation he practiced, Bhante related: “I’ve done some mettā and some ānāpānasati, but what I found most effective was cittānupassana. It struck right at the heart of the defilements.”

☸ “The description of cittānupassana in the suttas is quite brief. So, I developed my own method: when a kilesa arose in my mind — I was particularly concerned with hatred — I would ask, ‘Why?’. I would then notice that it was because of an attachment. I would observe that the attachment was dukkha (suffering), and ask ‘Why do I want that?’ In this way, I could let it go.

“Practicing in this way, I found that whenever suffering arose, it was because of attachment. When the attachment faded (after following the steps above), I could see that behind it was this

taṇhā, this thirst. I realized that the citta was nothing other than taṇhā. It was nothing other than the desire to become something, to keep something.”

☸ “When one observes, and sees that anger is caused by attachment, anger fades away. But, that is still not realization.”

☸ In practicing cittānupassana: “One learns to observe how the mind goes to external things and to see that it’s creating a self. One realizes that, ‘Any time I have dukkha, there’s an attachment to something. I don’t want it to be that way and so this attachment is causing me to suffer. I’m trying to make a self out of it.’ This search is motivated by the desire to create a self that one can never create.”

☸ *Monk*: “Can cittānupassana be used for lust?”

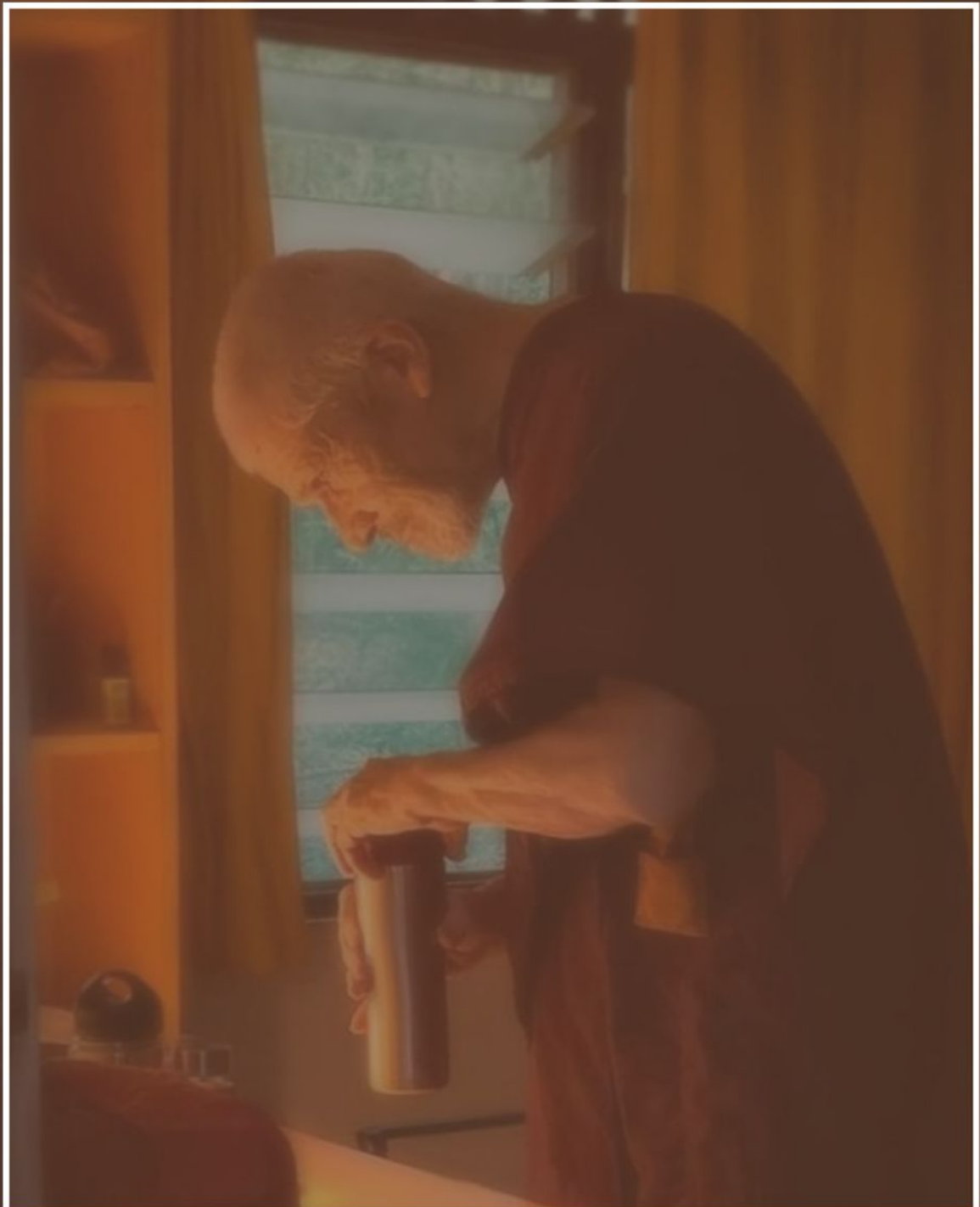
Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It can, but it should be used in conjunction with āsubha. Lust is alluring. Using cittānupassana for hatred is less dangerous because it’s less alluring.”

☸ *Sāmaṇera*: “What do you think the Sangha needs most right now?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Wisdom.”

Visiting Monk: “And, how does one cultivate wisdom?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Cittānupassana.”



Late Life

Late Life

A Step Out of Laggala

The upāsaka was pleased. The kuṭi construction was complete. Earlier, his father had helped Nyāṇadīpa Bhante construct his first kuṭi at Iryagasulpota. Now, he had the opportunity to help as well. While Bhante stayed at Elahara, he would help to look after his needs.

In 1998, Bhante left Laggala for the nearby Dambulla forest. Here he spent vassa in a kuṭi at Elahara. The Dambulla forest is similar to the Laggala forest. It is a large wilderness area, punctuated here and there by settlements. Like Laggala, the people in the settlements are tied together in a network of marriages and blood relations.

Within the Dambulla forest, one may come across ancient ruins. The area is home to one of the largest ancient cave monasteries in Sri Lanka called the Dambulla Cave Temple. It was constructed by King Vattagamini Abhaya. He had hidden in the area during his 14 years of exile from the throne. The local monks had supported him, and he was eventually able to recover his kingdom. He constructed the temple as an expression of gratitude.

In 1999, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante stayed in the Erewala Cave, not far from the village of Kandalama. This was part of an ancient cave monastery. At this time, his brother, Bernard, came to visit from Denmark. He stayed at the Kandalama Hotel.

In 2000, Bhante stayed at another kuṭi called the Wewala Kuṭi. Unfortunately, he became ill; therefore, he left for Kandy to seek treatment. In Kandy, he stayed at Bowalawatta Monastery. Following his stay at Bowalawatta, he returned to Laggala. In 2003, he intended to return to the Erewala Cave. However, after arriving, he thought of returning to Laggala. He wanted to help the family of a man who had come to believe that he'd attained arahantship.

In 2004, the Laggala Sangha had a special meeting. It was the 26th of December, the day that the tsunami swept over Sri Lanka. Bhante was again thinking of leaving Laggala. Previously he had left for the nearby Dambulla forest. This time, however, he was thinking to leave the Laggala area completely.

The day after the Sangha meeting, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's brother, Bernard, came to Laggala. He had arrived with his wife and daughter. They took Nyāṇadīpa Bhante and Guttasīla Bhante down to Kandy. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante stayed in a kuṭi on a supporter's property. Bernard and his family stayed in the main house. Over the course of the week, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante and his brother would meet in the afternoon or evening. At these meetings, Bhante would try to keep the conversation centred on the Dhamma.

Following this, Bhante and his brother parted ways. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante and Guttasīla Bhante continued on to Colombo in a lay supporter's vehicle. In Colombo, Guttasīla Bhante and Nyāṇadīpa Bhante parted. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante continued to Polgasduwa in the lay supporter's vehicle. Guttasīla Bhante went by bus to the Būndala Kuṭi.

At, Polgasduwa Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was able to meet Nyāṇavimala Bhante, who had inspired him in his early years. This was the last meeting of these two great monks. It was early 2005, and Venerable Nyāṇavimala would pass away later that year.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante left Polgasduwa on foot and began to head south. At one point, he stopped to spend the night on a large rock outside a village. The area had some forest. Unfortunately, the people in the area became suspicious and called the police. When the police arrived, they asked Bhante to spend the night at the local pansala, to which he agreed.

Eventually, Bhante made his way to the Balangoda area. Like the Laggala forest, this was also an area rich in wilderness. Here, Bhante would meet a group of like-minded monks. His stay would help to contribute to Sri Lanka's second large community of solitary meditators.

Bhaddeka Vihari

The group of monks approached Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's kuṭi. They were led by Venerable Wimalanyāṇa. Venerable Wimalanyāṇa was also living in a solitary kuṭi. He had come to stay in the forest near the village of Tanjantenna two years earlier, in 2003. By 2005, several monks had joined him. Five or six solitary kuṭis had been built and a community was beginning to form.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had made his way to the valley east of Tanjantenna. People had built him a kuṭi partway up a mountain, near the village of Welipathayaya. It was close to where Venerable Wimalanyāṇa was staying. Venerable Wimalanyāṇa and his group had heard that Bhante was living in the area. They had come to pay their respects.

Over time, Bhante and the community near Tanjantenna became integrated. The community would eventually come to be called 'Bhaddeka Vihari' or 'Thaenna' for short. After staying at the Welipathayaya Kuṭi, Bhante moved into another solitary kuṭi called the Dehipitiya Kuṭi. This kuṭi was located several kilometres west of Tanjantenna. It was a very remote, ancient cave kuṭi. There was a drip ledge to guide the rain away. Above the ledge, an ancient donor had inscribed their name in the rock. The village to which Bhante went for piṇḍapāta was itself located in the forest, kilometres from the road. Bhante liked the kuṭi very much. He stayed there for roughly two years, until 2008.

In 2008, a young monk from the nearby Belihuloya monastery came to see Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. His name was Ven. Nyāṇasumana and he had ordained just four years earlier. A friend of Ven.

Nyāṇasumana's had told him about Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. As a result, he became very interested in meeting him.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was staying in Venerable Wimalanyāṇa's first kuṭi outside Tanjantenna. Venerable Nyāṇasumana made his way more than a kilometre into the forest. Eventually, the forest opened up somewhat and Ven. Nyāṇasumana could see the kuṭi where Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was staying.

Ven. Nyāṇasumana and his friend approached the kuṭi and knocked on the door. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante opened the door, looking somewhat displeased. He didn't know they were coming and he didn't like visitors.

Venerable Nyāṇasumana and his friend paid their respects by bowing and introducing themselves. Following this, they began to ask Bhante questions about the Dhamma. Venerable Nyāṇasumana had come with an important question. Much to his surprise, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante answered his question before he had the chance to ask it. Their Dhamma discussion lasted about two hours. During their discussion, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante became more friendly. He liked to discuss the Dhamma. Overcome with inspiration, Ven. Nyāṇasumana invited Nyāṇadīpa Bhante to come to the nearby monastery of Belihuloya.

In February 2009, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante came to Belihuloya monastery for a break. While he was there, people provided him with the supplies he needed to live in the forest. Guttasīla Bhante and an American monk named Ajahn Buddhissāro decided to visit him. Other foreign monks came to meet Bhante as well. At Belihuloya, the small group of foreigners gathered to have a Dhamma discussion with Nyāṇadīpa Bhante. After the first discussion, they agreed that they would meet the following year, in February 2010. This began what came to be known as 'the Dhamma Discussions'.

Shortly before the February 2010 Dhamma discussion, one of Belihuloya monastery's lay supporters came to Ven. Nyāṇasumana's kuṭi. He said, 'There are two monks waiting to meet you in the dining hall.'

Ven. Nyāṇasumana went to the dining hall. Waiting for him were two monks and a layman. He had never seen them before in his life. The men had brought Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's bag for Ven. Nyāṇasumana. Inside was a letter, which read: "Nyāṇasumana, Don't go anywhere. I will come to Belihuloya in two weeks' time."

In the lead up to Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's visit, Ven. Nyāṇasumana received many calls. Word had spread that Nyāṇadīpa Bhante would be coming. Many monks were eager to meet him and discuss the Dhamma.

When Nyāṇadīpa Bhante arrived, Ven. Nyāṇasumana acted as his attendant. He prepared his kuṭi and tried to help Bhante with whatever might be needed. Many monks had come from

around Sri Lanka to discuss the Dhamma. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante stayed at the monastery and taught for about a week. Ven. Nyāṇasumana also accompanied Nyāṇadīpa Bhante on a trip to a nearby mountain.

The day before leaving the monastery, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante made a special announcement to the assembled monks. Referring to Ven. Nyāṇasumana, he said, “This is Nyāṇasumana. I give him permission to act as my attendant. He can come to see me at any time. When I leave here, I will bring him with me to my kuṭi.”

Ven. Nyāṇasumana followed Nyāṇadīpa Bhante back to his kuṭi. When they arrived, he bowed to Bhante and said: “Bhante, I don’t have a dāyaka (lay supporter); I don’t know how to look after you, but just you tell me and guide me. I will follow you. I give my promise until you die. I will look after you for the rest of my life.” It was a promise he would fulfill.⁶⁶

Ven. Nyāṇasumana’s first assignment was to get medicines that Bhante needed from Mr. Sidath Wettimuny. Following this, he would come to visit Bhante roughly every two months. He would bring Bhante the things he needed to live in the forest, such as band-aids and batteries. Before he left, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante would ask him when he was planning to come next.

Ven. Nyāṇasumana had a close relationship with Bhante. However, he considered himself a member of a team. Many other monks and laypeople helped to support Bhante as well.

In 2010, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante stayed at a remote kuṭi, not far from Belihuloya. A bull elephant in the area had a grudge against him. On two different occasions, it charged him. On the first occasion, Bhante fell to the side of the path; the elephant charged past him. On the second occasion, Bhante stood his ground; the elephant veered to the side before meeting him. Although the kuṭi was very dangerous, Bhante decided to continue staying there. He still had an uneasiness around elephants because of his accident. He wanted to stay and face the fear. However, he felt that one year in the kuṭi was enough. Spending more time there would be unwise.

The following February 2011, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante returned again to Belihuloya. This time even more monks came to see him. Ven. Kaṭukurunde Nyāṇanada⁶⁷ and his disciple also came to discuss the Dhamma. Many lay people also came to support the monks.

Following the Dhamma discussion, Bhante returned to Laggala. His presence in the Tanjantenna area made an impact. As at Laggala, the community at Tanjantenna accepted monks from any tradition. Also, as at Laggala, the monks lived in solitary kuṭis with no obligation to teach. They could devote themselves to meditation.

Living in Laggala, Bhante could find greater solitude. It wouldn’t last for very long. This would be Bhante’s final lengthy stay as a resident monk in the community he founded.

For the Benefit of Many

Nyānadīpa Bhante and Ven. Nyāṇasumana sat together on the porch of the kuṭi. The forest surrounded them. It was 2014, and Nyānadīpa Bhante had returned to Tanjantenna. He had come down with a stomach ulcer. Once again, he stayed in the Wimalanyāṇa's Bhante's first kuṭi.

"Nyāṇasumana, now I'm now getting old and weak." Said, Nyānadīpa Bhante. "I don't feel strong enough to live in the deep forest anymore. Now, I plan to travel from monastery to monastery. I want to give the opportunity to many monks."

In 2014, Ven. Nyānadīpa turned 70 years old. It was becoming difficult for him to live in the forest. As old age set in, the pendulum of Bhante's life swung towards the Sangha. After leaving Tanjantenna, in 2011, Bhante spent the next three vassas in Laggala. Unfortunately, in early 2014, he developed an ulcer near the entrance to his esophagus.

Bhante used to have a yoga routine. However, after his accident with the elephant, he was no longer able to do many standing yoga poses. He adapted by doing his yoga routine in a headstand. As he grew older, it became difficult for Bhante to do headstands. Therefore, he changed to the shoulder stand. This special yoga routine may have influenced the location of the ulcer.

To treat the ulcer, Bhante returned to Bhaddeka Vihari. At Bhaddeka Vihari, he was able to regain his health with a special diet and herbal medicine such as deglycerized licorice.

During his stay at Tanjantenna, Bhante was invited to spend the vassa at an Ovilikhandha Aranya in Matale. Bhante accepted the invitation. After vassa, he returned to Laggala for a stay in the Iryagasulpota Kuṭi. While there, a monk invited him to spend the vassa near Trincomalee. There was a kuṭi, which was very isolated, and supported by the navy. Bhante visited the area but decided not to stay.

Instead, the navy built him a kuṭi at Galpiuma Aranya in 2015. He stayed there for roughly one year. At Galpiuma Aranya, he met another special attendant. He was a sāmaṇera named Nyāṇavaṃsa. Since Bhante had recently developed digestive issues, lay supporters began to bring special food for him. This food was stored by Sāmaṇera Nyāṇavaṃsa. In the morning, he would prepare Bhante a special breakfast with oats, nuts, and dried fruit. At Galpiuma monastery, Nyānadīpa Bhante also met a special lay supporter named Mr. Prabath. Mr. Prabath would be instrumental in helping Bhante in his final years.

While staying at monasteries, Bhante was still able to maintain a solitary lifestyle. He would often stay in a kuṭi, somewhat separated from the other monks. He would also have a practice

of collecting the food for his meal separately. He sometimes ate in the dana sala before the other monks arrived. At other times, he would take his meal at his kuṭi. In this way, Bhante was able to maintain a solitary lifestyle. At the same time, he still made himself more available to those seeking his advice.

At Galpiuma monastery, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante meditated ardently. On one occasion, Guttasīla Bhante came to visit Nyāṇadīpa Bhante with another monk. They arrived at night, and the entire monastery was dark. They were unable to find any monks to point out Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's dwelling. Fortunately, Guttasīla Bhante had been to the monastery before. Guttasīla Bhante and the monk he came with arrived at Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's cave around 8:30 pm. There, they found Nyāṇadīpa Bhante sitting in meditation.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had worked out a method of living in Sangha, while still maintaining solitude. It was good that he had connected with the Sangha. His final years would come with health challenges. However, unexpectedly, he would also achieve a goal that he'd hoped for long ago.

The Good and the Bad

Bhante's back pain was severe. This alarmed Sāmaṇera Nyāṇavamsa. He asked Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, "Do we go to Colombo today or tomorrow?" "Today," replied Nyāṇadīpa Bhante.

It was 2019, and Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was spending vassa at a small aranya near the Padaviya tank. Sāmaṇera Nyāṇavamsa had accompanied Bhante. He was acting as one of Bhante's attendants.

Bhante's road to the monastery near Padaviya tank had been somewhat rocky. After leaving Galpiuma Aranya, he had arrived at Giribhāva Aranya west of Anuradhapura in 2016. This was a very small aranya, with only one resident monk. Bhante had a kuṭi built away from the main area. His meditation went quite well. Therefore, after a short visit to Laggala, he returned in 2017. Unfortunately, he came down with a severe and disorienting illness. This may have been a sign of the onset of the illness which would end his life in roughly three years.

In 2017, Bhante moved from Giribhāva to Etdalagala Monastery near the ancient Resvehera Monastery. At Etdalagala Monastery, there were ample facilities to help Bhante in case of a bout of ill health. The abbot, Ven. Nyāṇavīra and the resident community were very supportive. Guttasīla Bhante and monks from Laggala also came to see Bhante and helped to care for him. Pāsada Bhante from Laggala was an ex-doctor. Therefore, he was able to give Bhante special assistance.

After the 2017 vassa, Bhante stayed at Epalogama Aranya, then the Forest Hermitage and then at a small aranya near Siyambalagamuwa. In 2018, he once again spent the vassa at Etdalagala.

Just before the 2019 vassa, Bhante left Etdalagala for a small aranya near the Padaviya tank. With the flare-up of his back pain, he was taken to Colombo. In Colombo, he was given a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) test. This test can reveal the presence of prostate cancer. It tests for a protein produced in the prostate. A normal PSA level would be less than four ng/mL. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's test came back at close to 200 ng/mL. This indicated that something could be seriously wrong.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's lay supporter, Mr. Prabath, wanted to take Nyāṇadīpa Bhante to Singapore. In Singapore, he could have further medical examinations done. Unfortunately, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante didn't have a passport. With Mr. Prabath's help, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was able to apply for a Sri Lankan passport. The effort was successful. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante received a Sri Lankan passport with the name: 'VEN. POLGASDUWE GNANADEEPA THERO'. After nearly 20 years as a stateless person, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante became a citizen of Sri Lanka.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante, Sāmaṇera Nyāṇavarṇsa, and Mr. Prabath flew to Singapore. In Singapore, Bhante was examined by a group of specialists. Medical tests were conducted. The results confirmed that Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had cancer and that it was terminal. Bhante was given about a year and a half to live.

The group returned from Singapore to Sri Lanka with the unfortunate news. After a short stop at a monastery near Colombo, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante returned to Etdalagala Monastery. Not one to give up easily, he made his way to Laggala and there sought out the help of an Ayurvedic doctor.

Sri Lanka has a strong Ayurvedic tradition. Its roots may stretch back more than 2000 years to Sri Lanka's colonization from India. An Ayurvedic medical system exists alongside the Western medical system. The Ayurvedic system can sometimes provide treatment options when Western medicine fails. The medical abilities of some Ayurvedic doctors can seem miraculous. By checking a patient's pulse, they are sometimes able to accurately diagnose illnesses⁶⁸.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante received Ayurvedic treatment at Laggala for several weeks. Following this, he returned to Etdalagala Aranya. Here, the treatment continued. It seemed that it had been effective. Following the treatment, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante had put on weight. He looked and felt healthy. Bhante felt so good that it seemed to him the cancer had been eliminated.

In January 2020, Bhante took a short trip to Bhaddeka Vihari. It had been roughly seven years since his last visit. The abbot, Ven. Nyāṇānanda, took him to look at kuṭis. Bhante found a kuṭi he liked and said that he wanted to return in February. Following this, he returned to Etdalagala.

At Etdalagala, Ven. Nyāṇavīra convinced Nyānadīpa Bhante to go to Colombo for another cancer test. Bhante went, accompanied by Ven. Pasāda. In Colombo, Bhante was tested by a cancer specialist. He also took a special test from India. It would take time to get the test results. Bhante also had another PSA test. The results for the PSA test were available more quickly. They came back at 80 ng/mL. This was a significant drop from the previous high, near 200 ng/mL. So, it seemed that the Ayurvedic treatment had a positive effect.

Guttasīla Bhante and others organized a meeting to discuss Bhante's health. Monks who had helped to care for Bhante over the years attended. They invited Ven. Nyāṇānanda to the meeting as well. They wanted to inform him of Bhante's health needs.

As the meeting was underway, the results of Bhante's cancer tests arrived. Mr. Prabath had sent them via email. The test from India showed there was no hope. The report from the cancer specialist concurred — Bhante had at most, about one year to live.

A delegation of five or six monks were chosen to discuss the report with Bhante. They left the Sangha meeting, approached Bhante's kuṭi, and handed him the report. Bhante read the report and accepted it. The Ayurvedic treatment hadn't worked. His cancer was terminal. Bhante said that he would come to the meeting to discuss the matter with the monks in an hour.

About an hour later, Bhante made his way into the Sangha meeting. He said that he knew he had terminal cancer. Nevertheless, he was going to Thaenna (Bhaddeka Vihari) the following day. He intended to go there to die. However, this would not be his fate.

The Thaenna Discussions

The monk struck the wooden knocker three times. Walking in single file, the group of monks and the upāsaka made their way through the forest. Eventually, the forest opened up. As they progressed, they could see Nyānadīpa Bhante seated on a chair in front of his solitary kuṭi. Approaching, they removed their shoes and bowed in respect. After some small talk, they began to ask Bhante questions about the Dhamma.

The questions ranged from the mundane to the profound. Bhante's answers would sometimes be lengthy and sometimes curt. If the question particularly piqued his interest, he would lean forward in his chair and speak with a captivating intensity.

To some of his listeners, it seemed like they had been transported back to the time of the Buddha. It was inspiring to learn the Dhamma at Bhante's feet, deep in the forest.

Not long before, Bhante had arrived back at Bhaddeka Vihari. He secluded himself in Venerable Wimalanyāṇa's first kuṭi. In the morning, he would walk roughly one kilometre from his kuṭi to the central area, called the 'Gilanhala'⁶⁹. At the Gilanhala, he would take breakfast in a room

separate from the other monks. When he finished, he would again walk back to his kuṭi. At his kuṭi, he secluded himself to finish his work in the time remaining to him.

Once, after breakfast, Bhante turned to a monk who'd assisted him with his things. He said, 'I'll be holding Dhamma discussions on Thursdays at 4 PM. I want to give the opportunity.'

In this way, monks had the chance to discuss the Dhamma with Bhante regularly. As time passed, the kilometre walk back to the kuṭi became increasingly difficult for Bhante. However, his perseverance was inspiring to see. Refusing any company, he would make his way back to his dwelling, leaning on his stick for support.

Bhante Nyāṇasumana arrived in March. He was able to help to care for Bhante during his waning days. In late May, the journey from the kuṭi to the Gilanhala became too much. Bhante was moved to another forest kuṭi. At the new kuṭi, food could be brought by three-wheel.

Group Dhamma discussions also became difficult for Bhante. Therefore, the regular group Dhamma discussions were cancelled. Bhante began to have more physical pain. To help relieve the pain, monks began to take turns giving Bhante massages. During these massage sessions, they sometimes had the chance to ask Bhante Dhamma questions. Sometimes, as well, Bhante would answer questions about his personal life.

In early June, Bhante moved to the Gilanhala area and took up residence in the Mahāthera Kuṭi. This was a very large kuṭi with a bathroom and a kitchen. Several monks from Laggala had arrived to help with Bhante's care. Ven. Hemaloka set up a schedule. Bhante would have 24-hour a day assistance. Various bhikkhus residing at the monastery would look after Bhante on a rotating basis.

By mid-June, Bhante's hemoglobin levels had begun to drop. He was taken by helicopter to Colombo for a blood transfusion. In early July, Bhante was taken from Colombo, back to Etdalagala monastery. It was here that he would spend his last days.

Last Days

The medicine seemed to be working. Bhante had been given a special drug that was meant to work against the cancer. He seemed energized. He took out his special sutta notebooks and began to read. The assembled monks took it as a good sign. It seemed that Bhante might live past the end of vassa.

However, about midnight that night, things changed for the worse. Bhante began to feel very strong pain. It was so strong that he began shaking and couldn't maintain silence. This lasted for four hours. It appears that it was a heart attack.

Bhante had said that he wanted to die mindfully. However, the monks became so concerned, that they gave him two doses of morphine. After this, his strong physical symptoms began to ease.

The assembled monks began to chant the Girimananda Sutta⁷⁰. In this sutta, the Buddha is informed that a monk named Girimananda is sick. In response, he gives a teaching to Venerable Ānanda. When Venerable Ānanda repeats the teaching to Venerable Girimananda, his sickness is cured. Monks often chant this sutta in times of illness. During the chanting, on two occasions Bhante raised his hands in an attempt to put them in añjali. It was a gesture of appreciation.

Bhante's blood pressure began to rise. After reaching a peak, it dropped until the machine could no longer register it. His breath and pulse also stopped. A nurse was present and declared Bhante dead. It was approximately 7:15 am on September 12, 2020. Despite the pain of his final illness, Bhante's face bore an expression of peace.

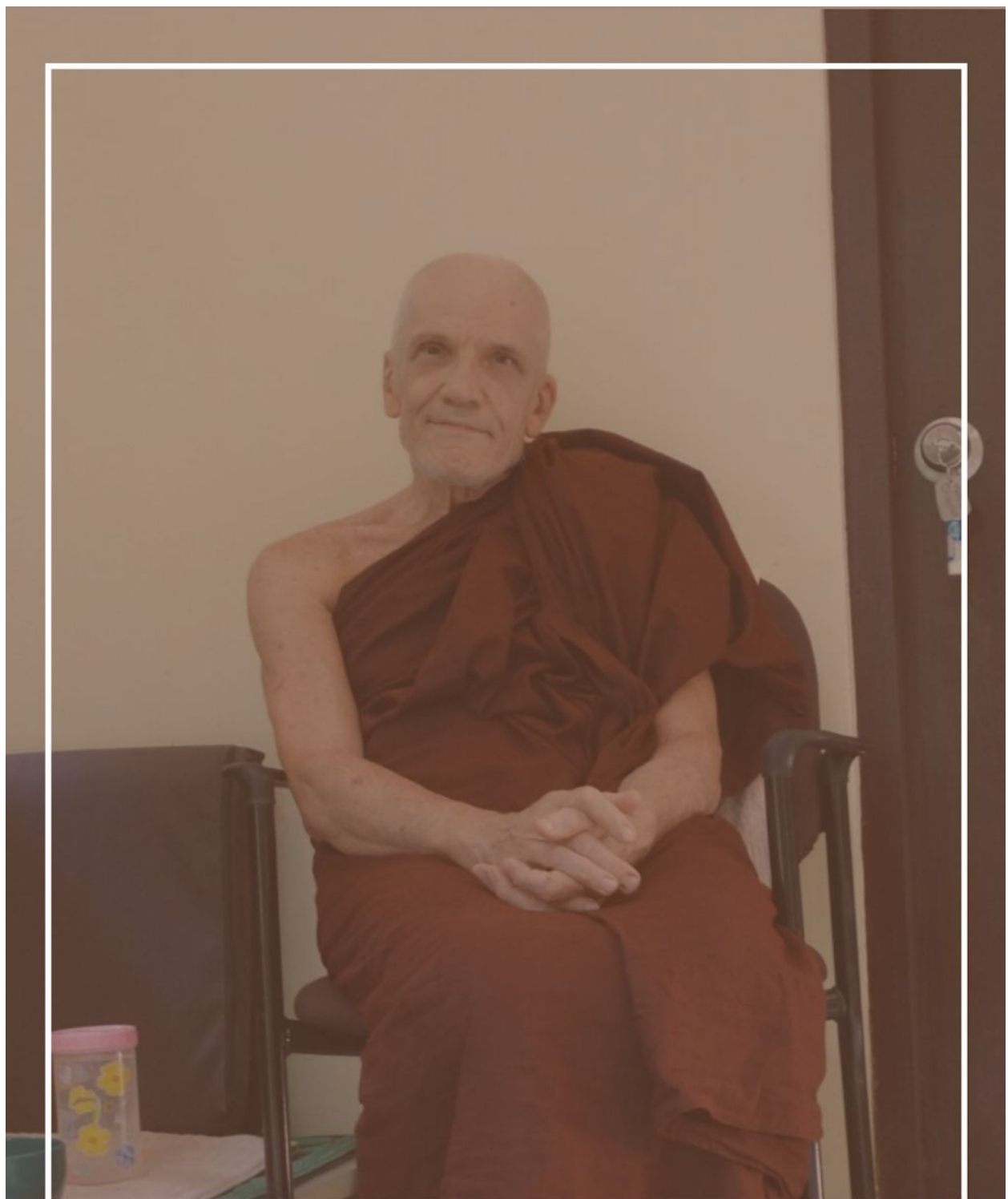
Bhante's body was held in the sīma hall at Etdalagala. Here, people would have the chance to pay their final respects. A stream of monastics and laypeople from across Sri Lanka came to see the great monk.

On September 14th, two days later, Bhante's cremation was held. Perhaps 200 monks and 600-700 lay people attended. Guttasīla Bhante gave a speech, saying that Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's passing marked the death of a legend.

In his 49 years in the monkhood, Bhante had pioneered an exemplary monastic lifestyle. It was a lifestyle focused on living in solitary kuṭis, deep in the forest. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante was unmatched in his solitary lifestyle among monks in modern Sri Lanka. Among monks in modern Sri Lanka, he was also unmatched in the depth of his experience dwelling in the deep forest. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's knowledge of the practical and theoretical aspects of the Dhamma was profound. For these reasons, and more, he became a legend.

In his search for solitude, Bhante had many kuṭis built. This allowed others to follow in his footsteps. It was his unique contribution to the Sri Lankan forest tradition. As knowledge of his practice spreads outside Sri Lanka, it may help to inspire the creation of opportunities for solitary practice in other parts of the world as well.

Perhaps, most importantly, Bhante's example pointed to a path to the noble attainments, available in the modern-day. This path is open for those who wish to follow it, for the sake of finding an end to suffering.



Paṭivedha | Realization



Paṭivedha | Realization

Noble attainments

☸ A monk asked Bhante about a statement in the Anguttara Nikāya. In that statement, the Buddha says that it's impossible to achieve psychic powers and arahantship without concentration that is peaceful, sublime, etc.⁷¹ He asked if that statement meant that one needed the fourth jhāna to attain arahantship. Nyāṇadīpa Bhante replied: "No, one doesn't need the fourth jhāna. In the Anguttara Nikāya, there is a sutta called the 'Eleven Doors to the Deathless'⁷². In this sutta, it says that one can attain Nibbāna based on any one of the four jhānas, the four Brahmaviharas, and three of the four immaterial attainments. One can contemplate impermanence based on any of these states. The first jhāna is sufficient."

☸ At present, in the West, there can be debate about what constitutes a noble attainment. One monk asked how a person can know if they've reached a noble attainment? Bhante replied: "One knows one has reached a noble attainment if one realizes the four noble truths in one's mind."

☸ "I don't agree with the practice of monks confirming one another's attainments. This is something which, in general, one cannot really know about another person. In some cases, monks will confirm others as stream-enterers or non-returners. They even confirm up to the level of arahant. Then, these so-called arahants disrobe and get married."

☸ In a previous discussion, Bhante had said that the mind is able to eliminate the defilements when it's mature. An upāsaka asked Bhante how one can know when the mind is mature. Bhante said: "I said that in reference to a discussion about cittānupassana. It's not something that one can measure. It happens on its own."

☸ Regarding the noble attainments, Bhante said, "Don't worry too much about gauging your level. Just keep going forward towards Nibbāna."

☸ There is a Vinaya rule which forbids a monk from revealing the supramundane⁷³ states he's achieved to a layperson⁷⁴. In the modern era, some accomplished monks have publicly revealed their attainments. This may have been to counter the view that Nibbāna is no longer possible to achieve in the modern age. A monk asked Bhante how one could reveal one's supramundane achievements, without breaking the rule. Bhante replied: "You can't. If one words it in an indirect way, that may avoid the offense. (There was one monk⁷⁵) who revealed everything about his experience of the attainment of arahantship on television... Well, the Buddha would not have approved."

Magga and Phala

☸ “In the suttas, it’s clear that someone with a magga is guaranteed to achieve a phala within that lifetime... The commentary says that magga occurs just a moment before phala. However, there is a sutta⁷⁶ which describes the merit of giving alms to someone with a magga. This would be almost impossible if magga occurred just a moment before phala.”

☸ “When one achieves a noble attainment, first one goes through a magga... If one has a magga, then one has no doubts as to how one should proceed.”

☸ When asked about the difference between a saddhānussari (faith follower) and a dhammānussari (wisdom follower), Bhante replied: ‘Both are sotāpattimagga. They are destined to reach sotāpatti in that life, but don’t yet have the ability to achieve it.’

☸ “The saddhānussari has faith in anicca, dukkha, and anattā. It isn’t a blind faith. The dhammānussari is safer because they rely on the faculty of wisdom.”

☸ “A sotāpanna would have an increased knowledge and ability to understand the Buddha’s teachings.”

☸ “There is a danger in overestimating oneself. The attainment of a phala is not something that one can plan. It happens when the mind is mature.”

Lay Stream Entry

☸ A Canadian lay practitioner asked Bhante if he knew any lay stream-enterers. If so, what helped them to achieve it? Bhante replied: “Yes, I believe I did know one, and I heard of others. He sold his business, retired and devoted himself to the Dhamma full-time.”

☸ Regarding the existence of lay stream enterers, Bhante said: “There must be.”

☸ *Nyāṇadīpa Bhante*: “Finding solitude, going to the forest would be difficult for a layperson.”

Monk: “What if they could do it?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “It would be a good thing. I would recommend it.”

☸ Some of Bhante’s advice for lay practitioners: “They can use the suttas, but probably the most important thing is to have a good teacher if they can find one. Although, I myself never had a teacher.”

Cittānupassana — Realization

☸ “When I was young, the *dosa citta* (hatred mind) was most prevalent. I used to observe the mind to see what it was that made me angry. Usually, it (anger) came when someone said something to me, which offended my perception of who I was. It arose because there was a conflict between what I thought of myself and what someone or something else was doing.

So, I would ask myself, ‘Why am I suffering?’. I found it was always related to this self-identity. This self-identity was all *taṇhā*. That’s what allowed me to make the breakthrough. One practices *cittānupassana* until one comes to the end of body and mind.

Concentration will be present at the time of the breakthrough. One’s defilements go away at that time, but only temporarily. Depending on the individual and the strength of concentration, it could be days, it could be four or five hours, it could be a half-hour but they gradually return.”

☸ Regarding the mind maturing through *cittānupassana* practice: “If one becomes angry, one learns to ask: ‘Why am I suffering when someone makes me angry?’ One learns to recognize that a notion of oneself has been challenged. With this, one can let go of the anger.

“The mind matures in the sense that the contemplation gradually deepens. One begins to see how thoroughly this desire to create a self penetrates. One sees that behind all of it is craving. This *citta* (mind) is nothing other than *taṇhā* (craving). It is thoroughly polluted by greed, hatred, and delusion. At this point, the mind matures and is able to relinquish its attachments and this is stream-entry.”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's Closing Reflections

During his time at Bhaddeka Vihari, the monks had the chance to give Bhante massages. At these massage sessions, Bhante would sometimes answer personal questions about his life. Some of his last reflections are given below:

☸ When asked about which monks were most inspiring to him, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante replied: “Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Ānanda. In his Theragāthā, Venerable Sāriputta said that he didn't go forth for knowledge of past lives or other psychic powers⁷⁷. He went forth for the destruction of the taints.

“Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Ānanda have some deep suttas. Most assume that I would be most inspired by Venerable Mahākassapa.”

☸ On one occasion a monk asked Bhante: “Who's the most inspiring monk you've ever met?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Nyāṇavimala Bhante.”

Monk: “What was the most memorable teaching Nyāṇavimala Bhante ever gave to you?”

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Don't ask me that.”

Monk: “Okay, what should I ask, Bhante?” Following the question, there was quite a long pause.

Nyāṇadīpa Bhante: “Well, the trouble is that my relationship with Nyāṇavimala Bhante was coloured by my relationship with Nyāṇavīra. Nyāṇavimala detested Nyāṇavīra and I was very clearly a student of Nyāṇavīra's teaching. And so, I felt a contradiction: the monk I found most inspiring was Nyāṇavimala Bhante, but he detested the teachings that I looked to for guidance.”

☸ Towards the end of his stay at Bhaddeka Vihari, Bhante moved to the Mahāthera Kuṭi. A novice commented that it was fitting that he was living in the Mahāthera Kuṭi, since he was a mahāthera. Bhante said: “I'm not a mahāthera. That term doesn't appear in the suttas. I prefer to call myself a ‘thera’”

☸ Many people thought Bhante was an arahant because of his inspiring lifestyle. However, Bhante would always deny it. On one occasion a monk asked Bhante if he had any doubts about the Buddha's teachings. Bhante replied: “I don't have any doubts but I'm not finished. Do you understand?”

☸ By the end of his life, Bhante had been a monk for almost 50 years. When asked how long the ups and downs of his practice lasted, he replied: “After 50 years in robes, you have quite a lot of ups and downs. They can take a long time.”

☸ *Sāmaṇera*: “Bhante, what is it that kept you going in your life as a monk? You’ve been a monk for over 50 years, and apparently, have never given up.”

Nyāṇādīpa Bhante: “I realized that there’s nothing else for me to do.”

☸ *Monk*: “What would you like to pass on to future generations after you die?”

Nyāṇādīpa Bhante: “The ‘No Cassa’ article.” (See Appendix I)

Appendix I — No Cassa Article

“*No cassa*”: A Nibbāna Focussing Practice

by Ñāṇadīpa Thera

Introduction

This is a note on the statement or formula “It might not be and there might not be for me; it will not be (and) there will not be for me”, *no cassa no ca me siyā, na bhavissati na me bhavissati* (hereafter abbreviated as *no cassa*) which is found in several suttas in the Pāli Canon.

The main source for this note is the Udāna Sutta (Khandha Saṃyutta 55, SN 22:55) which gives the only detailed explanation of the *no cassa* formula, and where it said that it can be used to cut the five lower fetters and even to attain Nibbāna. How could this cryptic formula be used to cut the fetters and to attain Nibbāna?

Before translating the Sutta and discussing its meaning I shall give a brief explanation of the *no cassa* formula itself.

The original formula originated among wandering ascetics some time before the Buddha. It was then used as a practice to realize “annihilation”, and the Buddha classes it as “annihilationism” (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*). However, the annihilationism of those who used the formula is not the coarse annihilationism of the materialists—who hold the view that annihilation is automatically reached at the dying moment—rather the view of those who used the formula was that annihilation is to be achieved through a spiritual effort. Annihilationists who held the view that annihilation was to be achieved through striving are described in the Brahmajāla Sutta, DN 1/D I 33–35. In the Kosala Sutta (AN 10:29 / V 63–64) the formula is even classed as the “highest” among outside views. The formula of the annihilationists was slightly different from the Buddha’s version, therefore, in order to get an understanding of *no cassa* it is useful to consider the annihilationist version first. In the Kosala Sutta it is said:

“This is the highest among outside views:
I might not be and there might not be for me;
I will not be (and) there will not be for me.

no cassaṃ no ca me siyā, na bhavissāmi na me bhavissati.

For one of such a view, monks, it is to be expected that there will be no attraction in being (*bhava*) for him, and there will be no repulsion regarding cessation of being in him.”

This means that the annihilationist is yearning for the cessation of being (*bhavanirodha*), but gets stuck with that because he does not know the correct way out. He regards cessation of being as annihilation of self (and with that of the world, so therefore there are two parts in *no cassaṃ*). This wish to ‘get out’ is also found in the right view formula *no cassa*, which shows the correct way out. The view of annihilation of self is a view involving the idea of self, and as such

only fuels the continuation of being—in other words it is *upādānapaccayā bhavo*. To practice *no cassa* correctly the core of this *upādāna* must first be eradicated, and to make this clear (to those who can understand) he changed *no cassaṃ* to *no cassa*:

It might not be and there might not be for me;
It will not be (and) there will not be for me.
no cassa no ca me siyā, na bhavissati na me bhavissati.

The main problem in translating the formula is to decide whether *c'* in *c'assa* stands for *ce*, “if”, or *ca*, “and”. The Pāli commentaries took it as “if”¹ and they were followed by most modern translators. However, linguistically this is less acceptable and it also does not fit very well with the Buddha’s exposition of it in the Udāna Sutta, where no “if” is expressed, not even indirectly.²

The Aṅguttara Commentary interprets the formula as follows:

“If it had not been: If, in the past, there had been no kamma producing individual existence; *it would not be mine:* now I would have no individual existence. *There will not be:* Now there will be no kamma producing a future individual existence for me; *there will not be mine:* In the future there will be no individual existence for me.”³

It is difficult to conceive how this could have been used as a meditation to cut the five lower fetters, which is the expressed purpose of it. Therefore, let us put aside “if” and adopt “and” as in my translation above. With an “and” both *no cassaṃ* and *no cassa* express a duality. In *no cassaṃ*, “I might not be”, the duality is “self and the world”, *attā ca loko ca*, or “self and what belongs to the self”, *attā ca attaniyaṃ ca*. In the annihilationist wrong view formula *cassaṃ*, “I might not be”, an attempt is made to do away with both in annihilation. So the formula refers clearly to a duality expressed by ... *ca* *ca* In the Buddha’s right view *no cassa* formula, however, a different duality is being expressed, one that does not refer to self. It would be tempting to see in it the simple duality of internal and external bases, however, the Buddha explains it in terms of the *khandhas*. The reason for choosing the *khandhas* may be that in that way *viññāṇa* is given more prominence. Indeed *viññāṇa* in the second part of the exposition becomes the centre of the investigation. What then is the duality expressed in the *khandhas*? *Viññāṇa* is one side of it and the four other *khandhas* (called *viññāṇaṭṭhitiyo* or supports of *viññāṇa*) are the other side. They are also summed up as *nāmarūpa*. So the duality is *viññāṇa–nāmarūpa*.

Let us see how this works in *no cassa*:

No cassa: *viññāṇa* might not be;

no ca me siyā: and there might not be *nāmarūpa* as reflected in it;⁴

na bhavissati: *viññāṇa* will not be;

na me bhavissati: and there will not be *nāmarūpa* as reflected in it.

Now that the meaning has been preliminarily explained we are ready to turn to the Sutta itself. First we will translate it and then proceed to the understanding of it. By keeping very close to the Buddha’s own exposition, we may come to see that it neatly explains every part of *no cassa*.

After this we may wonder why Bhikkhu Bodhi in his note to the Sutta writes “... in the Nikāyas the precise meaning of the formula is never explained.”

The Sutta called ‘Inspired’ Utterance (Udāna Sutta), SN 22:55

At Sāvaththī. There the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance:

“It might not be and there might not be for me;
it will not be (and) there will not be for me

—fully putting his heart into this⁵ a monk could cut the lower fetters.”

When this was said a certain monk said to the Blessed One: “But how, venerable sir, could a monk, by fully putting his heart into that, cut the lower fetters?”

“Here, monk, the uninstructed commoner who is not a seer of the noble ones and is not skilled and disciplined in their teaching, and is not a seer of advanced men and not skilled and disciplined in their teaching, regards matter as self or self as possessing matter or matter as in self or self as in matter; regards feeling perception *saṅkhāras* consciousness as self or self as possessing consciousness or consciousness as in self or self as in consciousness. He does not understand as it really is impermanent matter as impermanent matter. ... impermanent feeling ... impermanent perception ... impermanent consciousness as impermanent consciousness. ... consciousness that is *dukkha* as consciousness that is *dukkha*. ... consciousness that is not self as consciousness that is not self. ... conditioned consciousness as conditioned consciousness. ... He does not understand as it really is: ‘Consciousness will un-be.’

But, monk, the instructed noble disciple, who is a seer of the noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their teaching, and is a seer of advanced men and skilled and disciplined in their teaching, does not regard matter as self or self as possessing matter or matter as in self or self as in matter; does not regard feeling perception *saṅkhāras* consciousness as self or self as possessing consciousness or consciousness as in self or self as in consciousness. He understands as it really is impermanent matter as impermanent matter. ... impermanent feeling ... impermanent perception ... impermanent consciousness as impermanent consciousness. ... consciousness that is *dukkha* as consciousness that is *dukkha*. ... consciousness that is not self as consciousness that is not self. ... conditioned consciousness as conditioned consciousness. ... He understands as it really is: ‘Consciousness will un-be.’

And so it was with reference to the un-being of matter, the un-being of feeling, the un-being of perception, the un-being of *saṅkhāras*, the un-being of consciousness that a bhikkhu could by fully putting his heart into this: ‘it might not be and there might not be for me, there will not be (and) there will not be for me’ cut the five lower fetters.”

“Venerable Sir, by putting his heart into it in that way a monk could indeed cut the five lower fetters. Then by knowing and seeing in what way would the immediate destruction of taints occur.”

“Here monk the uninstructed commoner becomes terrified where there is no ground for fear. For this is terrifying to the uninstructed commoner: ‘It might not be and there might not be for me, it will not be (and) there will not be for me’. But the instructed noble disciple does not become

terrified where there is no ground for fear. For this is not terrifying to the instructed noble disciple: 'It might not be and there might not be for me, it will not be (and) there will not be for me'.

"Engaging in matter, monk, consciousness might stand, with a base in matter, established upon matter, and moistened by delight it might come to growth, increase, and abundance. Or engaging in feeling ... perceptions ... *saṅkhāras*, monk, consciousness might stand, with a base in *saṅkhāras*, established upon *saṅkhāras*, and moistened by delight it might come to growth, increase and abundance.

"Monk, if anyone were to say: 'Apart from matter, apart from feeling, apart from perception, apart from *saṅkhāras* I shall make known the coming and going of consciousness, its passing away and rebirth, its growth, increase, and development'—he would be stating an impossibility.

"Monk, if lust for the matter element has been abandoned by a monk, then due to the abandonment of lust the base is cut off and there is no establishment of consciousness. Monk, if lust for the feeling element ... perception element ... *saṅkhāra* element ... consciousness element has been abandoned, then due to the abandonment of lust the base is cut off and there is no establishment of consciousness. That consciousness being unestablished, not liable to growth, due to not fabricating⁶ is freed. Being freed it is steady, being steady it is content. Due to contentment he is not agitated, and being unagitated he becomes quenched in himself, and he understands: Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more getting into⁷ such and such a state."

Now we are ready to investigate the meaning of the Sutta, which has two main parts. The first part is giving the answer to the monk's first question: How could a monk cut the five lower fetters and become an *anāgāmi* by putting his heart into *no cassa*? The second part is the answer to the monk's second question about how to become an Arahant.

In the first part the Buddha starts by giving in brief the usual way of developing insight into the five *khandhas*. Each of the five should be understood first as *anicca*, then as *dukkha*, then as *anattā*. Now one more step is taken: each of the five *khandhas* is understood to be *saṅkhata* (conditioned). The realizing of this I take to be equivalent to the first part of the statement ("It might not be and there might not be for me.").

The word *saṅkhata* not only sums up the previous three contemplations, but also adds a fresh understanding: the whole thing as such is entirely conditioned and therefore can be brought to an end. This is the meaning of *no cassa no ca me siyā*. "Might not be" expresses a *possibility*: it is possible for the whole thing not to be. Although everything occurring in experience is obviously impermanent, yet there is a *continuation* of this very experiencing the impermanent. In other words there is a *permanence of impermanent things*. So we have to see that this "permanence" too is "impermanent". However, it is "impermanent" in a different way: capable of ceasing without recurrence, a *one-way* impermanence as one might say. Usual impermanence is arising-standing-ceasing, arising-standing-ceasing,⁸ This "impermanence" simply is: ceasing and no more. In other words, *irreversible cessation*. So "it might not be" then means that it is possible to realize irreversible cessation, or that Nibbāna is a real possibility.

This brings us to the last contemplation: “Matter will un-be, feeling will un-be, perception will be un-be, *saṅkhāras* will un-be, consciousness will un-be.” This is going beyond the mere possibility. To “put one’s heart” into this means to go fully in for the realization of this possibility, to be completely convinced that not only the present matter, but *matter as such*—that not only the present consciousness but *consciousness as such* is going to cease entirely. The fundamental duality of *viññāṇa-nāmarūpa*, each being unable to stand without the other, is going to cease irreversibly. This is the meaning of the second part of *no cassa*, which is *na bhavissati na me bhavissati*: “it will not be (and) there will not be for me”.⁹

The Buddha goes on to say that it was with reference to (this very definite possibility of realizing) the un-being of the five *khandhas* that a bhikkhu could, by putting his heart into *no cassa*, cut the five lower fetters. With this the Buddha’s answer to the first question is completed.

Of course the *puthujjana* would not have the full confidence that is required for this practice. Only one who has entered the stream that flows to Nibbāna could with full confidence say: “it will not be!” So if one does not have enough confidence one would have to spend a long time with the preliminary part of the practice—getting the full understanding of what is meant by *anicca-dukkha-anattā*. For this, however, the instruction here is too brief and additional information from other Suttas would be needed. In this Sutta, clearly, the Buddha is addressing primarily *sekhas*. *Puthujjanas* might still get inspired by it and at least get an inkling of that the whole practice is about.

One might wonder why this practice only leads to *anāgāmi*-hood and not to *arahatship*. The reason for this is that *no cassa* uses desire for Nibbāna¹⁰ as its vehicle, and *at the last stage* this desire could become a hindrance. Nevertheless, as Ānanda says (AN 4:159) desire is to be abandoned through desire, and therefore other Suttas, which will be given in the appendix, give the additional possibility of going the whole way to *arahatship* with *no cassa*. Here in the Udāna Sutta, however, the Buddha uses a different tactic.

The next question is about how the *āsavās* are destroyed and *arahatship* reached. The Buddha starts by telling the monk that the untrained mind, when considering the meaning of *no cassa* would find it terrifying. The mind-in-training would still tend to be terrified when first turning to *no cassa* practice. Fear is quite an appropriate reaction when one first turns the mind to this teaching of complete cessation. Indeed if this profound fear did not arise it might indicate that the investigation has not gone deep enough. Everything has to be abandoned including consciousness in its entirety. There is nothing, absolutely nothing to hold on to. This *must* appear as fearful, indeed more fearful than anything else. But the Buddha tells the monk: *there* there is nothing to fear. So he gets on with it, and now he sees peace where formerly he sensed fear, and he is ready for the Buddha’s further instruction.

To cut the last stronghold of attachment, that of consciousness towards consciousness,¹¹ the Buddha now recommends an indirect approach: To see that consciousness (in any form, pure or impure) cannot continue independently of the other four *khandhas*. And these of course are *anicca-dukkha-anattā*, or in one word, *saṅkhata*. Realizing this he loses desire not only for *nāmarūpa* (the first four *khandhas*) but also for *viññāṇa* itself. *Viññāṇa* is now freed, not established on anything, not liable to growth; and that is because it no longer “fabricates” (or gets involved with *saṅkhāras*). This is *saṅkhāranirodha* (cessation of *saṅkhāras*) which brings

about *viññāṇanirodha* (cessation of *consciousness*). However because the body has been created by *past saṅkhāras*, *viññāṇa* does not cease completely yet. That is why there are two *nibbānadhātu*. The *arahat* has realized the first (*saupādisesa*, with residue), in which the fabricating process has been stopped, in which *viññāṇa* is no longer being food (*āhāra*) for continuation in *saṃsāra*. Still the effects of past *saṅkhāras* have to run out, and only then is the complete cessation of consciousness realized—this is the *anupādisesa nibbānadhātu* (“the Nibbāna element without residue”).

Bhikkhu Brahmāli, in his article on Nibbāna¹² has remarked that one cannot take Nibbāna as an *object* in contemplation. This is correct, *directly* it cannot be the object of consciousness. But one can nevertheless *focus upon* Nibbāna.¹³ There are several Nibbāna focussing practices mentioned in the Suttas. It even seems that one cannot become an *arahat* without undertaking such a practice—and perhaps not even an *anāgāmi*. Mahāmālunkya Sutta (MN 64) seems to imply the latter, but the Karajakāya Sutta (AN 10:218) seems to indicate that there are other ways of becoming *anāgāmi*.

To focus upon Nibbāna does not mean to take Nibbāna as an object. It implies a feeling that the mind (or rather the heart) is getting drawn towards Nibbāna, the mind feels that it is *on the way* to Nibbāna. Nibbāna here is simply regarded as *bhavanirodha* (cessation of being). *Bhavanirodha nibbānaṃ*, “the cessation of being is Nibbāna” is already understood by the *sotapanna*, who however, is not able to “touch it with the body”¹⁴ (see SN 12:68). The “touching of it through the body” is realized by the *arahat* when he enters the specific *samādhi* that only *arahats* can attain. Sāriputta Thera describes it as “Cessation of being is Nibbāna; cessation of being is Nibbāna’—thus one perception after the other arose¹⁵ and ceased, arose and ceased.” While experiencing this he was neither percipient of the four elements nor of the four *arūpas* nor of this world nor of the other world yet he was percipient (see AN 10:6). This means that all other perceptions are excluded in this *samādhi*. This and not *saññāvedayitanirodha*, the cessation of perception and feeling, is the *arahat*’s Nibbāna experience. It is not *itself* the *anupādisesa nibbānadhātu*—rather it is the experience of *being on the verge* of entering it. *anupādisesa nibbānadhātu* cannot *as such* be experienced, for it is the *end* of experience. *Saññāvedayitanirodha*, though it might be called “the end of experience” too, is still stuck with *rūpa*, and so is not the end of *bhava*.

Appendix I

Other Occurrences of No Cassa

There are several other Suttas in which the *no cassa* formula occurs. Next to the Udāna Sutta, the Purisagati Sutta (AN 7:55) is the most important source for understanding *no cassa*. The Sutta states that seven “destinies of persons” can be reached with the *no cassa* formula, as well as Nibbāna through not-clinging. The seven are the usual five *Anāgāmis* with the first one divided into three according to the quickness of attaining Nibbāna. This is the *antarāparinibbāyī*, the one who is quenched in between, (i.e. between passing away and taking rebirth in the *suddhāvāsa*). Here *no cassa* gets an addition: “what is, what has come into being, that I abandon—thus he gets equanimity.” This further clarifies the meaning of *no cassa*. The difference between the seven *Anāgāmis* and the *Arahat* is that the *Anāgāmis* have not totally

abandoned the underlying tendencies to conceit, lust for being, and ignorance, but the latter has.

In the Āneñjasappāya Sutta (MN 106) it is said that *no cassa* can lead to either the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception or to final Nibbāna, according to whether he has attachment to the equanimity gained through *no cassa* or not. It seems that in the first case he does not even become an Anāgāmi and that he has used *no cassa* for a different purpose.

Finally, in the Kaccāna Sutta in the Udāna (no. 68) it occurs as part of a verse, saying that one for whom mindfulness of the body is always established and who gradually develops *no cassa* would in due time cross the viscous domain of craving (*visattikā*, which often is connected with *taṇhā*):

*For whom mindfulness of the body
is constantly and at all time established:
“It might not be and there might not be for me,
It will not be and there will not be for me.”
Gradually developing this,
he might in due time cross over the viscosity.*

Appendix II

Nibbāna

Today there are many different views regarding Nibbāna. All of those who have these views can be classed in two categories: those who take it to mean some kind of continuation and those who say that it means total cessation. We might call them the “continuationists” and the “cessationists”. Between these views, there can be no in-between; it is either-or. Those who know do not argue about it. Those who don’t know are bewildered or else they assert that nothing can be known about it before actually getting there. This note is meant to assist the bewildered ones.

Let’s first consider the Buddha’s advice in the Apaṇṇaka Sutta (MN 60 /M I 410-1):

“Householders, there are some recluses and brahmins who hold the view ‘There is not complete cessation of being’. But, householders, among those recluses and brahmins there are also some who hold the view ‘There is complete cessation of being’. Now, what do you think, householders, are not those recluses and brahmins in direct opposition to each other? Yes, Venerable Sir. In regard to this, householders, the wise man considers like this: With regard to those who say, ‘There is not complete cessation of being’, this is not something I have seen. With regard to those who say, ‘There is complete cessation of being’, this is not something I have come to know. But if I, not knowing, not seeing, would declare affirmatively: ‘This is the truth, all else is false’, that would not be appropriate for me.”

“(If this is so, then one should consider this:) Those who hold the view ‘There is not complete cessation of being’, their view is close to lust, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to attachment, close to clinging. Those who hold the view ‘There is complete cessation of being’ their view is close to non-lust, close to non-bondage, close to non-delighting, close to

non-attachment, close to non-clinging. Having considered this, he practises for the purpose of disenchantment with all modes of being, for dispassion, for cessation of all modes of being.”¹⁶

Now, can there be two meanings to the word *bhavanirodha*, “cessation of being”? Not if we don’t look outside of it. Nevertheless, there are some other Sutta passages which could be interpreted in different ways. The famous and much disputed statement “There is the unborn”, which continuationists will take to mean “there is an Unborn”, i.e. permanent entity. The cessationists, however, would take it to mean “there is the (possibility of gaining) freedom from birth”. If we accept this, we are not outside of the range of the known. We are only considering what can be known—the whole range of it. As is said in the Mahanidāna Sutta (DN 15 / II 63): “To this extent, Ānanda, there can be being-born, ageing, dying, falling away and getting reborn; to this extent there can be a way of description, a way of language, a way of making known, a field for understanding; to this extent the round rolls on to manifest a state of being—namely, *nāmarūpa* together with *viññāṇa* ...” And to bring *this* to an end is all we are concerned about, because *within* that there is no escape from *dukkha*. Then it may be asked “But what then beyond that?” That question has no meaning. Only regarding what is within *viññāṇa–nāmarūpa* (i.e. the five *khandhas*) can we ask and answer questions. Only within the “expanse”, *papañca*, can we talk of anything. And if we go beyond that, then we are going beyond the known, and therefore it can only be a belief, a belief that springs from a want, the want that is called *bhavataṇhā*. But it is for the abandoning of all wants that we practise the Buddha’s teaching.

Appendix III

Pāli passages

Right View

Udāna Sutta, SN 22:55/III 55–58

Sāvatthinidānaṃ. Tatra kho bhagavā udānaṃ udānesi – no cassa, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissatī ti – evaṃ adhimuccamāno bhikkhu chindeyya orambhāgiyāni saṃyojanānī ti. Evaṃ vutte, aññataro bhikkhu bhagavantam etadavoca – yathā katham pana, bhante, ‘no cassa, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissatī ti – evaṃ adhimuccamāno bhikkhu chindeyya orambhāgiyāni saṃyojanānī ti?

Idha, bhikkhu, assutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisdhammassa akovido sappurisdhamme avinīto rūpaṃ attato samanupassati; rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ; attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Vedanaṃ ... Saññaṃ ... Saṅkhāre ... Viññāṇaṃ attato samanupassati; viññāṇavantaṃ vā attānaṃ; attani vā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. So aniccaṃ rūpaṃ aniccaṃ rūpan-ti yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti; aniccaṃ vedanaṃ ... Aniccaṃ saññaṃ ... Aniccaṃ saṅkhāraṃ ... Aniccaṃ viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ viññāṇan-ti yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. ... Dukkhaṃ viññāṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. ... Anattaṃ viññāṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. ... Saṅkhatam viññāṇaṃ yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. ... Viññāṇaṃ vibhavissatī ti ... viññāṇaṃ vibhavissatī ti yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti.

Sutavā ca kho, bhikkhu, ariyasāvako ariyānaṃ dassāvī ariyadhammassa kovido ariyadhamme suvinīto sappurisānaṃ dassāvī sappurisdhammassa kovido sappurisdhamme suvinīto na rūpaṃ attato samanupassati; rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ; attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Na vedanaṃ ... Na saññānaṃ ... Na saṅkhāre ... Na viññānaṃ attato samanupassati; viññānavantaṃ vā attānaṃ; attani vā viññānaṃ, viññānasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. So aniccaṃ rūpaṃ aniccaṃ rūpan-ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti; aniccaṃ vedanaṃ ... Aniccaṃ saññānaṃ ... Aniccaṃ saṅkhāraṃ ... Aniccaṃ viññānaṃ aniccaṃ viññānan-ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. ... Dukkhaṃ viññānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. ... Anattaṃ viññānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. ... Saṅkhatāṃ viññānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. ... Viññānaṃ vibhavissatī ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.

So rūpassa vibhavā, vedanāya vibhavā, saññāya vibhavā, saṅkhāraṇaṃ vibhavā, viññānaṃ vibhavā, evaṃ kho, bhikkhu, no cassa, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissatī ti – evaṃ adhimuccamāno bhikkhu chindeyya orambhāgiyāni saṃyojanānī ti. Evaṃ adhimuccamāno, bhante, bhikkhu chindeyya orambhāgiyāni saṃyojanānī ti.

Kathaṃ pana, bhante, jānato kathaṃ passato anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hotī ti? Idha, bhikkhu, assutavā puthujjano atasitāye tṛhāne tāsāṃ āpajjati. Tāso heso bhikkhu assutavato puthujanassa – ‘no cassa, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissatī ti.

Sutavā ca kho, bhikkhu, ariyasāvako atasitāye tṛhāne na tāsāṃ āpajjati. Na h’eso, bhikkhu, tāso sutavato ariyasāvakassa – no cassa, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissatī ti. Rūpupayaṃ vā, bhikkhu, viññānaṃ tiṭṭhamānaṃ tiṭṭheyya, rūpārammaṇaṃ rūpappatiṭṭhaṃ nandūpasecanaṃ vuddhiṃ virūḷhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjeyya. Vedanupayaṃ vā, bhikkhu... saññupayaṃ vā, bhikkhu... saṅkhārūpayaṃ vā, bhikkhu, viññānaṃ tiṭṭhamānaṃ tiṭṭheyya, saṅkhārarammaṇaṃ saṅkhārappatiṭṭhaṃ nandūpasecanaṃ vuddhiṃ virūḷhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjeyya.

Yo bhikkhu evaṃ vadeyya ahaṃ aññatra rūpā, aññatra vedanāya, aññatra saññāya, aññatra saṅkhārehi viññānaṃ āgatiṃ vā gatiṃ vā cutiṃ vā upapattiṃ vā vuddhiṃ vā virūḷhiṃ vā vepullaṃ vā paññāpessāmī ti, netāṃ tṛhānaṃ vijjati.

Rūpadhātuyā ce, bhikkhu, bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti. Rāgassa pahānā vocchijjat’ārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññānaṃ na hoti. Vedanādhātuyā ce, bhikkhu, bhikkhuno... Saññādhātuyā ce, bhikkhu, bhikkhuno... Saṅkhāradhātuyā ce, bhikkhu, bhikkhuno... Viññānadhātuyā ce, bhikkhu, bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti. Rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññānaṃ na hoti. Tadappatiṭṭhitaṃ viññānaṃ avirūḷhaṃ anabhisaṅkhacca vimuttaṃ. Vimuttattā tṛhitattā santusitaṃ. Santusitattā na paritassati. Aparitassaṃ paccattaññeva parinibbāyati. Khīṇā jātī, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā ti pajānāti. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhu, jānato evaṃ passato anantarā āsavānaṃ khayō hotī ti.

Purisagati Sutta, AN 7:55/IV 69–73

Satta ca bhikkhave, purisagatiyo desessāmi anupādā ca parinibbānaṃ. Taṃ suṇātha, sādhuṃ manasi karotha; bhāsissāmī ti. Evaṃ, bhanteti kho te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosum. Bhagavā etadavoca – katamā ca, bhikkhave, satta purisagatiyo?

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – ‘no cassa no ca me siyā, na bhavissati na me bhavissati, yadatthi yaṃ bhūtaṃ taṃ pajahāmī ti upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. So bhava na rajjati, sambhave na sajjati,¹⁷ atth’uttariṃ padaṃ santaṃ sammappaññāya passati. Tañca khvassa

padam na sabbena sabbam sacchikataṃ hoti, tassa na sabbena sabbam mānānusayo pahīno hoti, na sabbena sabbam bhavarāgānusayo pahīno hoti, na sabbena sabbam avijjānusayo pahīno hoti. So pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā antarāparinibbāyī hoti. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃ santatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā nibbāyeyya. Evamevaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – ‘no cassa no ca me siyā, na bhavissati na me bhavissati, yadatthi yaṃ bhūtaṃ taṃ pajahāmī ti upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. So bhava na rajjati, sambhave na sajjati, atth’uttariṃ padaṃ santaṃ sammappaññāya passati. Tañca khvassa padaṃ na sabbena sabbam sacchikataṃ hoti, tassa na sabbena sabbam mānānusayo pahīno hoti, na sabbena sabbam bhavarāgānusayo pahīno hoti, na sabbena sabbam avijjānusayo pahīno hoti. So pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā antarāparinibbāyī hoti.

... so pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā antarāparinibbāyī hoti. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃ santatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā uppatitvā nibbāyeyya. ... antarāparinibbāyī hoti. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃsantatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā uppatitvā anupahacca talaṃ nibbāyeyya. ... upahaccaparinibbāyī hoti. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃsantatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā uppatitvā upahacca talaṃ nibbāyeyya. ... asaṅkhāraparinibbāyī hoti. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃsantatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā uppatitvā paritthe tiṇapuñje vā kaṭṭhapuñje vā nipateyya. Sā tattha aggimpi janeyya, dhūmampi janeyya, aggimpi janetvā dhūmampi janetvā tameva parittam tiṇapuñjaṃ vā kaṭṭhapuñjaṃ vā pariyādiyitvā anāhārā nibbāyeyya ... sasaṅkhāraparinibbāyī hoti. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃsantatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā uppatitvā vipule tiṇapuñje vā kaṭṭhapuñje vā nipateyya. Sā tattha aggimpi janeyya, dhūmampi janeyya, aggimpi janetvā dhūmampi janetvā tameva vipulaṃ tiṇapuñjaṃ vā kaṭṭhapuñjaṃ vā pariyādiyitvā anāhārā nibbāyeyya. ... uddhaṃsoto hoti akaniṭṭhagāmī. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, divasaṃsantatte ayokapāle haññamāne papaṭikā nibbattitvā uppatitvā mahante tiṇapuñje vā kaṭṭhapuñje vā nipateyya. Sā tattha aggimpi janeyya, dhūmampi janeyya, aggimpi janetvā dhūmampi janetvā tameva mahantaṃ tiṇapuñjaṃ vā kaṭṭhapuñjaṃ vā pariyādiyitvā gacchampi daheyya, dāyampi daheyya, gacchampi dahitvā dāyampi dahitvā haritantaṃ vā pathantaṃ vā selantaṃ vā udakantaṃ vā ramaṇīyaṃ vā bhūmibhāgaṃ āgamma anāhārā nibbāyeyya. Evamevaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – no cassa no ca me siyā ...pe... so pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā uddhaṃsoto hoti akaniṭṭhagāmī. Imā kho, bhikkhave, satta purisagatiyo.

Katamañca, bhikkhave, anupādāparinibbānaṃ? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – ‘no cassa no ca me siyā, na bhavissati na me bhavissati, yadatthi yaṃ bhūtaṃ taṃ pajahāmī ti upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. So bhava na rajjati, sambhave na sajjati, atth’uttariṃ padaṃ santaṃ sammappaññāya passati. Tañca khvassa padaṃ sabbena sabbam sacchikataṃ hoti, tassa sabbena sabbam mānānusayo pahīno hoti, sabbena sabbam bhavarāgānusayo pahīno hoti, sabbena sabbam avijjānusayo pahīno hoti. So āsavānaṃ khayā...pe... sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati. Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, anupādāparinibbānaṃ. Imā kho, bhikkhave, satta purisagatiyo anupādā ca parinibbāna-ti.

Āneñjasappāya Sutta, MN 106/II 274–75

Evaṃ vutte, āyasmā ānando bhagavantaṃ etadavoca – idha, bhante, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – ‘no cassa, no ca me siyā; na bhavissati, na me bhavissati; yadatthi yaṃ, bhūtaṃ – taṃ

pajahāmī ti. Evaṃ upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. Parinibbāyeyya nu kho so, bhante, bhikkhu na vā parinibbāyeyyāti? Ap’etth’ekacco, ānanda, bhikkhu parinibbāyeyya, ap’etth’ekacco bhikkhu na parinibbāyeyyāti. Ko nu kho, bhante, hetu ko paccayo yen’ap’etth’ekacco bhikkhu parinibbāyeyya, ap’etth’ekacco bhikkhu na parinibbāyeyyāti? Idhānanda, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – ‘no cassa, no ca me siyā; na bhavissati, na me bhavissati; yadatthi, yaṃ bhūtaṃ – taṃ pajahāmī ti. Evaṃ upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. So taṃ upekkhaṃ abhinandati, abhivadati, ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. Tassa taṃ upekkhaṃ abhinandato abhivadato ajjhosāya tiṭṭhato tannissitaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ tadupādānaṃ. Saupādāno, ānanda, bhikkhu na parinibbāyati ti. Kahaṃ pana so, bhante, bhikkhu upādiyamāno upādiyati ti? Nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ, ānandāti. Upādānaseṭṭhaṃ kira so, bhante, bhikkhu upādiyamāno upādiyati ti? Upādānaseṭṭhañhi so, ānanda, bhikkhu upādiyamāno upādiyati. Upādānaseṭṭhañhetam, ānanda, yadidaṃ – nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ.

Idhānanda, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti – ‘no cassa, no ca me siyā; na bhavissati, na me bhavissati; yadatthi, yaṃ bhūtaṃ – taṃ pajahāmī ti. Evaṃ upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. So taṃ upekkhaṃ nābhinandati, nābhivadati, na ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. Tassa taṃ upekkhaṃ anabhinandato anabhivadato anajjhosāya tiṭṭhato na tannissitaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ na tadupādānaṃ. Anupādāno, ānanda, bhikkhu parinibbāyati ti.

Kaccāna Sutta, Udāna 68/p. 77

Evaṃ me suttaṃ: Ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme. Tena kho pana samayena āyasmā mahākaccāno bhagavato avidūre nisinnaṃ hoti pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya kāyagatāya satiyā ajjhataṃ parimukhaṃ sūpaṭṭhitāya.

Addasā kho bhagavā āyasmantaṃ mahākaccānaṃ avidūre nisinnaṃ pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya kāyagatāya satiyā ajjhataṃ parimukhaṃ sūpaṭṭhitāya.

Atha kho bhagavā etamatthaṃ veditvā tāyaṃ velāyaṃ imaṃ udānaṃ udānesi –

*Yassa siyā sabbadā sati,
Satataṃ kāyagatā upaṭṭhitā,
No cassa no ca me siyā,
Na bhavissati na ca¹⁸ me bhavissati,
Anupubbavīhāri tattha so,
kālen’eva tare visattikaṇ-ṭi.*

Wrong View

Kosala Sutta, AN 10:29/V 63

Etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, imāsaṃ catunnaṃ saññānaṃ yadidaṃ ‘natthi kiñcī ti ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ-eko sañjānāti. Evaṃsaññinopi kho, bhikkhave, santi sattā. Evaṃsaññinampi kho, bhikkhave, sattānaṃ attheva aññathattaṃ atthi vipariṇāmo. Evaṃ passaṃ, bhikkhave, sutavā ariyasāvako tasmimpi nibbindati. Tasmimpi nibbindanto agge virajjati, pageva hīnasmimi.

Etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, bāhirakānaṃ diṭṭhigatānaṃ yadidaṃ ‘no cassaṃ, no ca me siyā, na bhavissāmi, na me bhavissati ti. Evaṃdiṭṭhino, bhikkhave, etaṃ pāṭikaṅkhaṃ – ‘yā cāyaṃ bhava appaṭikulyatā, sā cassa na bhavissati; yā cāyaṃ bhavanirodhe pāṭikulyatā, sā cassa na

bhavissatī ti. Evaṃdiṭṭhinopi kho, bhikkhave, santi sattā. Evaṃdiṭṭhīnampi kho, bhikkhave, sattānaṃ attheva aññathattaṃ atthi vipariṇāmo. Evaṃ passaṃ, bhikkhave, sutavā ariyasāvako tasmimpi nibbindati. Tasmiṃ nibbindanto agge virajjati, pageva hīnasmim.

Pārileyya Sutta, SN 22:81/III 98

Na heva kho rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, na vedanaṃ ... na saññaṃ... na saṅkhāre... na viññāṇaṃ attato samanupassati; nāpi evaṃdiṭṭhi hoti – so attā so loko, so pecca bhavissāmi nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāmadhammo ti. Api ca kho evaṃdiṭṭhi hoti – ‘no cassaṃ no ca me siyā nābhavissāmi na me bhavissatī ti. Yā kho pana sā, bhikkhave, ucchedadiṭṭhi saṅkhāro so. So pana saṅkhāro kiṃnidāno kiṃsamudayo kiṃjātiko kiṃpabhavo? Avijjāsamphassajena, bhikkhave, vedayitena phuṭṭhassa assutavato puthujjanassa uppannā taṇhā; tatojo so saṅkhāro. Iti kho, bhikkhave, sopi saṅkhāro anicco saṅkhato paṭiccasamuppanno. Sāpi taṇhā aniccā saṅkhatā paṭiccasamuppannā. Sāpi vedanā aniccā saṅkhatā paṭiccasamuppannā. Sopi phasso anicco saṅkhato paṭiccasamuppanno. Sāpi avijjā aniccā saṅkhatā paṭiccasamuppannā. Evampi kho, bhikkhave, jānato evaṃ passato anantarā āsavānaṃ khayoti.

Endnotes

**In the original version, these are given as footnotes.*

1 See Bhikkhu Bodhi's discussion of this in *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, pp. 1060–63, note 75 to SN 22:55.

2 The reason why *ca* is expressed in the first part of the statement and not in the second, and that there is *no* in the first part and *na* in the second, are purely out of metrical considerations and has no bearing on the meaning. The statement forms two *pādas* of a *Vaitālīya* verse, and appears as a verse in the Udāna (Ud 77).

3 A-a IV 38; see Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation, *Numerical Discourses* p. 1781, note 1532 to AN 7:55.

4 In the first part the Buddha changed the first person of *cassaṃ* in the annihilationist formula to the third person so as to accord with right view, but not in the second part (*no ca me siyā*). Probably this was because one would not be able to find a third person word that fits the metre, which requires one long syllable. So here “for me” means “for *viññāṇa*”, whereas in *cassaṃ* it meant “for me” literally. So I use “reflected in it” in the sense of “appearing to *viññāṇa*”.

5 *Adhimuccamāno*. ‘Putting one’s heart into’ gives the idea of *adhimuccati*. The usual translation ‘resolve’ fails to give the right meaning. *Adhimuccati* is close in meaning to *saddahati* (the verb from *saddhā*), but stronger in meaning. See the Parivāraṃsana Sutta (SN 12:51 / S II 83), *Saddahatha me taṃ, bhikkhave, adhimuccatha, nikkāṅkhā ettha hoṭha nibbīkicchā. Esevanto dukkhassā ti*, and in the Okkanta Saṃyutta (S III 224ff), *yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati ayaṃ vuccati saddhānusārī*.

6 *Anabhisankhacca*: “not making *saṅkhāras*”. Here I have borrowed Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu's translation, though above I have left *saṅkhāra* untranslated for lack of the right word. *Abhisankacca* is an absolute, a variant of *abhisankharitvā*, and as such has an active sense. The PTS reading *anabhisankhārañca* is wrong.

7 “Getting into” is meant to render the dative case in *itthatāya*, literally “for”, which is ambiguous in English.

8 See the Khemaka Sutta (SN 22:89): ... *pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassī viharati: itī rūpaṃ, itī rūpassa samudayo, itī rūpassa atthaṅgamo* ... and the *saṅkhatalakkhaṇāni* (AN 3:47).

9 I have translated *vibhavissati* above as “will un-be” to show the connection with *na bhavissati* “it will not be”, they are identical in meaning.

10 This desire is called *nirodhataṇhā* which parallels with the *vibhavataṇhā* of the annihilationist. Both are opposed to *bhavataṇhā*. *Nirodhataṇhā* uses the right tool for this work, *vibhavataṇhā* the wrong one.

11 This means that *viññāṇa*, although purified from attachment to *nāmarūpa* still is attached to the *upekkhā* that is gained by being purified in that way. In other words, *viññāṇa* is attached to itself, i.e. the fabricating process has not completely come to an end, there is still *saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ*.

12 “What the Nikāyas Say and Do not Say about Nibbāna”; *Buddhist Studies Review*, Vol 26, No 1 (2009).

13 See MN 64 and AN 9:36: *amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharati*—“he focuses the mind on the deathless element”.

14 *Kāyena phusitvā viharati*, “dwells having contacted it with the body”. This expression is used with those who master the *arūpa* attainments, as well as with Arahats who “touch the highest truth with the body.” “Touching with the body” means a non-intellectual way of experiencing, a contacting with the “heart”. This joins with the intellectual way of seeing, which is expressed as “he sees having penetrated it with wisdom”. This is called “liberation through wisdom”, *paññāvimutti*, whereas the former is “liberation through the heart”, *cetovimutti*.

15 He is describing a past event to Ānanda.

16 *Bhava* is plural here.

17 *Sajjati* is found in the PTS edition and also in the Chinese translation so it must be the correct reading. So we get *sajjati* (get stuck) here and *rajjati* (to lust for) in the former. The reason for that may be that one lusts for being (*bhava*), but gets stuck in becoming (*sambhava*). *Sambhava* refers to the *antarābhava* (the being in between). If one gets “stuck in” that, the body changes and becomes a *Peta* right in that place.

18 A three lined *Vaitālīya* verse. That a *ca* has been inserted here is purely for correcting the metre. In *cassaṃ* there is regular rhythm, but due to the change it became slightly irregular, and here where it is included in a verse the irregularity is corrected by inserting a *ca*.

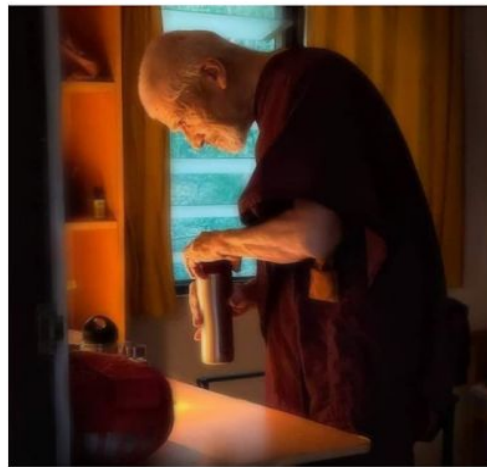
Appendix II — Photos



Bhante Joe helps Nyāṇadīpa Bhante put on his sandals soon after his arrival at Bhaddeka Vihari. January 29th, 2020.



Nyāṇadīpa Bhante receiving his evening drink.



Nyāṇadīpa Bhante inside Ven. Vimalanyāṇa's first kuti with his evening drink.



Sweeping up at Nyāṇāḍīpa Bhante's kutī.



Nyāṇāḍīpa Bhante heads back to his kutī to gather his things. He would change to another kutī later that day. May 6th, 2020.



Nyāṇānada Bhante, the abbot of Bhaddeka Vihari, helps to carry Nyāṇāḍīpa Bhante's bowl after breakfast dāna.



Nyānadīpa Bhante chats with monks before his massage session.



Nyānadīpa Bhante takes his morning walk along the reservoir road. At this time, he was residing at the Gilanhala (central area).



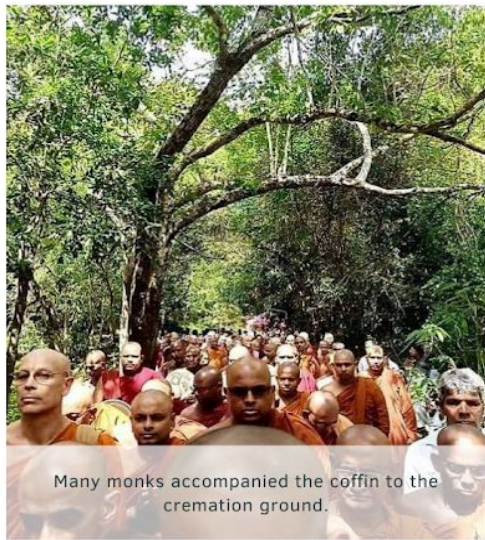
Ven. Pasādo pays respects to Nyānadīpa Bhante outside the Mahāthera Kutī.



Sugatavam'sa Bhante accompanies Nyāṇādīpa Bhante to Colombo by helicopter.



Monks pay respects to Nyāṇādīpa Bhante's body at Etdalagala monastery.



Many monks accompanied the coffin to the cremation ground.



Monks circumambulate the pyre carrying Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's coffin.



The funeral pyre is lit.



Paying respects to Nyāṇadīpa Bhante's remains.

Endnotes

Pāriyatti

1. When recording this note, I couldn't remember what the last two books Bhante listed were. After discussing with another person, who was at the same session, it seems that they were likely the Theragāthā and the Therīgāthā.
2. Bhante specifically mentioned the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions.
3. SN 103: Says develop dispassion as to a murderer with an upraised sword. AN 7:49 describes developing fear towards indolence as to a murderer with an upraised sword. AN 6:103 describes developing disenchantment towards all saṅkhāras as to a murderer with an upraised sword. In SN 35:197 murderer with upraised sword also stands for passion and delight.
4. SN 12.2: feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name
5. These are obscure terms used in the Mahā Nidāna Sutta. See DN 15.
6. I couldn't remember which elements of the name group he mentioned but from recollection Bhante cited the five khandha formulation of name and form.
7. This seems to be because if one couldn't perceive / designate something, it wouldn't exist in one's world of experience.
8. See AN 2.30
9. See AN 9:45 — Both Ways. DN 15 also mentions that one can be released in both ways simultaneously.
10. Translated by Thānissaro Bhikkhu. The full translation is available at https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/AN/AN4_173.html
11. See DN 16
12. In an earlier discussion, Bhante had explained that someone who had a magga was guaranteed to reach the phala within that lifetime. In other words, if someone was a sotāpatti magga, they were guaranteed to become a sotāpanna within that lifetime.
13. As opposed to experience beginning with form (rūpa) and feeling (vedana).
14. It seemed that Bhante's point could be understood on at least two levels: 1. That one can gain liberating insight into a Dhamma principle and that insight can extend to all of saṃsāra. Thus, one doesn't have to understand all of saṃsāra to free oneself from it. 2: That one doesn't have to see all of one's past lives to understand re-birth. If one sees the principles of re-birth in this life, that understanding can extend to other lives as well.
15. A type of meditation where one learns to focus on the mind in and of itself.
16. See SN12.67
17. Conversely, it seems that name and form would depend on consciousness because if consciousness were not present in the mother's womb, name and form would not take shape.
18. Unfortunately, I've forgotten the reason Bhante gave for this. It may be related to the statement in MN 43: The Mahāvedalla Sutta, that feeling, perception, and consciousness are conjoined.
19. See DN 15: The Mahānidāna Sutta
20. 'dhamma' is multifaceted word that basically means 'phenomena'. In it's relationship with 'mano viññāna | mind consciousness', 'dhamma' is sometimes translated as 'ideas'.
21. See MN 143: Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta
22. In describing consciousness as an element, Bhante did not say that it was permanent. Bhante seemed to be explaining that consciousness is called an element because it connects the past and future and resists one's efforts to make it whatever one wants.
23. Bhante here seemed to be referring to the upadāna (clinging) linking name and form to consciousness. An arahant would not have this clinging, and so nothing could be 'painted' on their consciousness. Bhante said that the manner in which this worked was mysterious.

- 24. The consciousnesses of different arahants.
- 25. 'Puggala' means 'person'.
- 26. See DN 11.

Middle Life

- 27. From my notes, Bhante seemed to relate that these incidents with elephants happened in the Singharājā forest. However, after discussing with a senior monk, it seems that I may have been mistaken. The Sinharāja forest has almost no elephants. Bhante had told this senior monk stories about elephants coming to his kuṭi in Wilpattu. The kuṭi there was also very basic. Therefore, the senior monk suggested that it was likely Wilpattu. This seemed like a reasonable assumption. Therefore, Wilpattu is given as the location for these incidents.
- 28. A set of 13 ascetic practices one or more of which are often taken up by meditation monks.
- 29. In Pāli, this means 'giver'. It is a term used in colloquial Sinhala to denote a layperson who cares for monks.
- 30. This means 'great suffering'.
- 31. When discussing this incident, Bhante said, "These things can happen." He seems to have been referring to bad omens.
- 32. The context in which Bhante related this portion of the story made it seem as a type of foreboding as well.
- 33. By now the reader may be starting to get a sense of the impressive extent to which Bhante went on cārikā. What is harder to convey is his humility around his accomplishments. When one monk asked if he went on cārikā, he said, 'Not like Ajahn Mun. No one can match him.' When speaking with Bhante, one could get the impression that he only went on cārikā once a year. His humility in itself was an impressive accomplishment.
- 34. Monks are required to spend three of the four months of the vassāna season (lasting roughly July to November) in one place. However, for certain reasons, they are allowed to leave for up to seven days. Bhante took advantage of this special allowance to visit Sāmaṇera Samita.
- 35. Pārājika #3.

Paṭipatti

- 36. In my notes, I had written that Bhante had become used to elephants in the Sinharāja forest. However, a senior monk who knew Bhante well had given an explanation as to why this would have been the Būndala forest. I updated the quote to reflect his advice.
- 37. This comes from Udāna 4.5: the Nāga Sutta. A nāga can mean any great being. An arahant is the foremost nāga.
- 38. It seems Bhante knew he would not die because he recognized the snake. It was likely the snub-nosed viper. The snub-nosed viper has a medium level of poison. It can cause swelling but is unlikely to result in death.
- 39. Here Bhante seemed to be referring to snakes not usually being aggressive towards humans. They would certainly be dangerous in the sense of having venom.
- 40. From what I can remember, Bhante made a motion indicating that one would split the fingers on one hand and put two fingers in each nostril.
- 41. Here, Bhante made a gesture with both arms slightly off of the sides of his body, and the palms open.
- 42. Here, Bhante seems to be indicating that if one has goodwill for the beings in the forest, one will be more likely to view them in a friendly way. Therefore, one will have less fear towards them.
- 43. These were the older version of the maps.

44. Bhante related that after his accident with the elephant, he could no longer sit in the usual meditation posture. Previously, he could sit in the full lotus posture. He had to sit with only one leg crossed in front. The other leg, he kept at his side, as in a kneeling posture. He could sit in this position very stably.
45. The monk remained silent and didn't agree. Therefore, it was possible to relate this story without breaking any promises.
46. Here, Bhante seemed to be emphasizing that sometimes the best place to stay may be unexpected. In other discussions, he said that for some it may be more suitable to stay in aranyas. So, here, he doesn't seem to be saying that one should not stay in 'normal' monasteries as a hard and fast rule.
47. Referring to a practice of going barefoot most of the time.
48. When asked, Bhante said this would be most of the gāthās in the Pāli Canon.
49. Bhante's 'walks in the forest' were among the most extensive in his day. As related above, one of his 'walks' went from Kandy to Haputale. This would perhaps be close to 130 kilometres of trekking through the wilderness.
50. See SN 46.53
51. See AN 6.68
52. See SN 47:8
53. The monk's name has been replaced with 'he' here.
54. See MN 119
55. See SN 46.53
56. A meditation practice focussed on mindfulness of breathing.
57. See DN 13: The Tevijja Sutta as an example of one sutta where this method is described
58. Here, Nyāṇadīpa Bhante may have been referring to the type of mettā meditation in which one spreads mettā to different classes of beings such as breathing things, men, women, deities, noble ones, etc. This type of meditation is described in the Paṭisambhidamagga in the Khuddaka Nikāya.
59. See MN 77: The Mahāsakuludayi Sutta.
60. Sutta Nipāta: Pārāyana Vagga: Upasīva's Questions.
61. This is an article that Bhante wrote under the pseudonym Vanaratana Ānanda Thera. It argues that one can't take Nibbāna as an object of meditation.
62. The way in which the self is something arises — not as an independent reality, but as an experience — is an area in which much contemplation can be done. A large range of contemplations can also be done on the self being a negative thing.
63. See AN 4.170
64. These are, respectively: contemplation of the body, of feelings, of the mind, and of mental phenomena. See DN 22: The Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.
65. Perhaps saññā could be related to cittānupassana or dhammānupassana.

Late Life

66. Nyāṇasumana Bhante took care to explain that was working as a member of a team. He especially mentioned the help of Sidath, Ranjan, and Sunil Wettimuny. He also mentioned his steward, Chandana.
67. Ven. Nyāṇananda was well-known among Western Buddhists for his books, 'Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought' and 'Magic of the Mind'. He had originally ordained at the Island Hermitage, but had later re-ordained in the Galduwa tradition.
68. The author has experienced this firsthand.
69. This can be translated as 'Sick Hall'. The central area was originally built as a place where sick monks living in solitary kuṭīs could receive medical care.

Paṭivedha

70. See AN 10.60

71. See An 6.70 (6)

72. See AN 11.16 (6), the Dasama Sutta. In the original versions of the Anguttara, no titles were given to the Suttas. The titles now given are the result of recent editors. Bhante referred to this sutta by a different name. This seems to have been the name given by a different translator.

73. Psychic powers and the noble attainments.

74. See Pc 8 in the Buddhist Monastic Code, Vol I by Thāṇissaro Bhikkhu.

75. Bhante stated the monk's name. Here, it has been omitted.

76. See MN 142

77. See Thag 17:2

Glossary

Anagārika — A homeless one. This is sometimes a state that a lay person will take on prior to ordaining as a Buddhist monk. Anagārikas follow eight precepts and typically wear all white clothing.

Ānapānasati — Mindfulness of breathing. Perhaps the most commonly practiced meditation technique.

Arahant — One who has achieved Nibbāna. An arahant is no longer subject to birth and death.

Ārupa Realm — Formless realm. The highest realms of existence. Beings are reborn here as a result of achieving and frequently dwelling in the formless meditations.

Ariyapuggala — A noble disciple of the Buddha. Guaranteed to attain Nibbāna in an amount of time that varies, depending on their class. There are four classes: stream-enterer (seven lives at most), once-returner (one life), non-returner (the attainment of arahantship in a special heaven called the pure abodes), arahant (no more rebirths)

Aranya — Forest monastery.

Añjali — A position of the hands in which both are touching palm to palm. The hands are typically held over the heart. This is similar to the Christian prayer position. Monks will put their hands in this position as a sign of respect to those senior to themselves.

Āsubha — Meditation on the unbeautiful aspects of the body. Typically done by contemplating the body in terms of 32 parts.

Bhikkhu — A Buddhist monk.

Cārikā — A wandering tour by foot. Typically this type of journey is done for a long stretch, with overnight stops. Traditionally, monks would walk from place to place. Wandering in this way was part of the traditional homeless lifestyle of a monk.

Cittānupassana — Contemplation of the mind. One of the four establishments of mindfulness.

Dāyaka — A lay supporter. In Sri Lanka, individual laypeople will often become supporters of specific monks.

Deva — A resident of one of several heavens. Sometimes translated as ‘god’, these beings have many special powers.

Dhammānupassna — Contemplation of mental qualities. One of the four establishments of mindfulness.

Dhammānussari — Dhamma follower. A person on the path to stream entry for whom the wisdom faculty is prominent. They are destined to achieve stream-entry in that life. It seems they will do so by relying on the wisdom faculty.

Dhamma-Vicaya — Investigation of phenomena. This mainly seems to refer to the investigation that takes place with the vipassanā topics recommended by the Buddha. However, it can also refer to the investigation of the suttas.

Dosa — Hatred

Dukkha — Suffering. This includes all types of suffering from minor forms such as stress to major ones such as feeling devastated by the loss of a loved one.

Iddhipāda — Four ‘bases’ or qualities of mind leading to supernormal abilities. The foremost supernormal ability is the attainment of arahantship. The four qualities are: desire, effort, intent, and investigation.

Jhāna — Four states of successively refined mental absorption. These states are characterized by successively refined levels of happiness. They begin with bodily rapture and end with equanimity.

Kayānupassana — Contemplation of the body. This is one of the four foundations of mindfulness. It includes meditation topics such as meditation on the foulness of the body and meditation on the four elements.

Khandha— Heap or aggregate. There are five: body, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. These are the constituent parts of certain types of beings such as humans and animals. They are impermanent, and therefore, the being they combine to create is impermanent as well.

Kilesa — A defilement of the mind.

Magga — Path. In terms of the Buddha’s teaching. This is used to refer to someone with the ‘magga’ noble attainment. They are guaranteed to reach the next highest level of that attainment within that lifetime.

Marāṇasati — Mindfulness of death. A topic of meditation in which one contemplates the uncertainty of life in order to arouse urgency, promote dispassion, etc. There are different variations of this technique.

Nimitta — A mental vision that can vary depending on the meditation topic. The arising of a nimitta can indicate that a practitioner has reached a preliminary level of depth in their meditation.

Noble Attainment — One of four stages of irreversible attainment on the path to Nibbāna. See ‘Ariyapuggala’.

Pansala — A village temple.

Passaddhi — A feeling, which precedes samādhi. This can also be seen as the quality of calmness in the mind.

Phala — Fruit. In the Buddha’s teachings, usually used to refer to the achievement of a noble attainment.

Piṇḍapāta — Almsround. Traditionally, monks collect their food by going on almsround to the village.

Pīti — A feeling of rapture in the body. This feeling is energetic and also has a physical component.

Puthujjana — Often translated as ‘worldling’. Someone who has not reached one of the four noble attainments.

Rūpa — Form. One of the five khandhas (see khandha).

Samādhi — States of mental absorption. These include the four jhānas, the four immaterial attainments and the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling.

Saññā — Perception.

Saddhānussari — A person on the path to stream entry for whom the faith faculty is prominent. They are destined to achieve stream-entry in that life. It seems they will do so by relying on the faith faculty.

Sotāpanna (sotāpatti) — A stream-enterer. The first stage on the Buddhist path to Nibbāna. One who achieves this is reborn seven times more at most.

Sukha — Sometimes used to refer to a supernormal feeling of mental happiness. Often coupled with pīti, it is a component of the first three jhānas. It can also refer to more mundane types of pleasant feeling.

Sutta Nipāta — A book in the Khuddaka Nikāya section of the sutta pitaka. This book is primarily composed of poems. It extols the virtues of dwelling in solitude in the forest.

Taṇhā — Craving / thirst. This is the root defilement in the four noble truths and the cause of suffering.

Upāsaka — A male lay Buddhist.

Upasampadā — Higher ordination. A monk goes through two phases of ordination. In the first, called pabbaja, he becomes a sāmaṇera, and keeps ten precepts. In the second, called upasampadā, he becomes a bhikkhu and keeps 227 precepts.

Upekkhā — Equanimity. This can refer to the supramundane equanimity of the fourth jhāna. It can also refer to equanimity of a more normal sort.

Vassa — Rains retreat. During this time, monks are encouraged to stay in one place. The monastic rules place restrictions on their travel. Generally, the vassa period lasts from July until October.

Vedanānupassana — Contemplation of feelings. One of the four establishments of mindfulness.

Vipassanā — Insight. More commonly used to describe a class of meditation. This class of meditation uses thinking and perception to counter delusion.

Vinaya — The monastic code of conduct. There are 227 major rules for monks. There are perhaps thousands of minor rules.

Viññāna — Consciousness.

Viriya — Energy / effort.

Abbreviations

MN — Majjhima Nikāya
AN — Anguttara Nikāya
SN — Samyutta Nikāya
DN — Dīgha Nikāya
Thag — Theragāthā

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